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THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD ILLUSTRATED.

Printed by R. Tilling, Newport, Isle of Wight.

THE

INCARNATION

OF

THE SON OF GOD

Illustrated.

IN THREE PARTS:

I. THE NECESSITY OF IT ESTABLISHED.
II. THE REALITY OF IT PROVED.
III. THE BLESSINGS OF IT EXHIBITED.

BY JOHN MELDRUM.

The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. JOHN.

I would by publishing the design of the Saviour's incarnation, engage you to concur in it. By celebrating the glory of the King Messiah, I long to see it displayed among you, in all its splendid magnificence. SAURIN.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR MESSRS. WILLIAMS AND SMITH,
STATIONER'S-COURT.

1807.

PREFACE.

A RATIONAL illustration of any leading subject of divine Revelation may always be acceptable to the sober and religious: such know the value of divine truth, and seek improvement in their meditations on it. They appreciate the value of those helps, or means, by which they may grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. To such the present work may be of use, to establish them, when weak and assaulted, against the many avowed enemies who attack the foundation of their faith, hope, and joy: to promote their acquaintance with a leading subject in the Christian religion, that they may be able to withstand their sophistry: and to exalt the glory of the eternal Son of God, who, that he might redeem, and save us from all evil, humbled himself to be found in fashion as a man, and took upon him the form of a servant.

The incarnation is incontestibly the most important article in Christianity; "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." All other particulars are but subservient to, and illustrative of this—it is the most magnificent display of the infinite, condescending goodness of the Creator to miser-

able creatures:—it is the admiration of angels, and glory of men. It is true the word is not to be found in our translation of the Holy Scriptures; but the subject is most clearly and fully stated in many parts, which none who make the Sacred Oracles the subject of their meditation and study can miss observing. *The* WORD *was made flesh, and dwelt among us*: this is our text. GOD *was in* CHRIST, *reconciling the world unto himself*; is our subject—the object of our illustration. *The* SON OF GOD *became the offspring of David, according to the flesh*: this is our proof, evidenced by prophecy, sacrifices, and the authentic history of Jesus Christ. Hence it is a most emphatic word, clearly intimating a divine person in human nature:—the eternal divinity united to humanity, in a way consistent with the honour of Deity, and the felicity of mankind.

"By publishing the design of the Saviour's incarnation, I would engage you to concur in it. By celebrating the glory of the King Messiah, I long to see it displayed among you in all its splended magnificence." This motto, borrowed from the celebrated Saurin, well expressed the motive which gave existence to the present work. The design of it, is to display the glories of redeeming love; to celebrate the praises of the King immortal, eternal, and invisible: to engage the concurrence of fellow-mortals with the overtures of sovereign mercy, held out and offered by the Child born, the Son given; the

Father of eternity. Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Love that is magnified by the unworthiness of its object; the infinity of its extent; the omnipotence of its operations; the wisdom of its contrivance; and the riches of its effects.

You have here, Christian reader, a plain illustration of matters of fact. Old truth exhibited in a style and manner as much as possible, suitable to the solemnity of the subject. Here you will find few rhetorical embellishments, or profound philosophical reasonings, the ornaments which man's wisdom teacheth. These have not been sought after, nor have been always employed when they have offered their services: because the subject does not stand in need of them. The meretricious decorations of vain and lewd characters are but a disgrace to native beauties; and the truly modest and pious know where to fix the difference. The doctrine before us is all glorious:—glorious within, like the King's daughter: glorious without, like the King in his beauty: glorious when viewed afar off: and inexpressibly glorious on the nearest survey—it is too glorious to need human ornaments. Let these attend philosophy, and accompany her to the borders of divinity; but let them be laid aside in his presence, who hath given being to every divine truth. He who is glory itself in our nature, needs neither crowns, nor sceptres, nor mitres, nor purples,

nor equipages, nor armies to add to his dignity and honour.

There are some characters belonging to our subject which are worthy of observation; because they have a direct tendency to impress the mind of considerate, serious readers. The contemplative, pious Christian cannot help seeing how awfully solemn! divinely delicate! profoundly deep! sublimely grand! and unspeakably beneficial the incarnation of the Son of God must be! Every character that can be found in the great, the sublime, the amazing, the astonishing, the blessed, the happy, is found in HIM whose name is WONDERFUL, even when in the lowest state of his humiliation. Every thing created loses its lustre, when compared with Emmanuel.

How awfully solemn is every view which it hath pleased the self-existent almighty God to give us of himself! When he speaks, it is with awful majesty; when he acts, it is with invincible energy; when he appears, it is with overpowering glory, which naturally excites terrors, and unsufferable fears, in the weak minds of creatures. But his incarnation, in which he veils his Deity, is well calculated to remove all the fears which oppress them, and to inspire with courage and holy boldness when they approach him. Hereby he comes to bless and comfort the afflicted; not to chastise and punish, however much sinners may deserve it It cannot be supposed, that the most compassionate and

merciful Creator would assume human nature only to punish the guilty. This he could have done completely by the exertion of his power, without thus humbling himself. But his love and mercy could not be exercised to the miserable, in that full and extensive manner which was necessary, but by clothing himself with the seed of Abraham. How solemn is this act of the eternal Majesty! Nature loses its solemnity when contrasted with this. The awful, eternal Divinity humbles itself to the lowest state of rational existence: and shall not immortal creatures of the same nature, by this obtain complete salvation, and eternal happiness?

Hence the INCARNATION is a most delicate subject, to be contemplated with most profound reverence, and adoring thankfulness. It ought not to be treated with such careless indifference, inattention, and levity, as many professed Christians evidently do; speaking of it often with impious contempt, and some positively denying it. Such neither know it, nor will be at the pains of examining the necessity which requires it, or the proofs by which it is established. It is too delicate for carnal minds, therefore they reject it. It has too much of heaven for the men of this world; and it cannot be accommodated to their sensual appetites and low pursuits. It is too refined for their coarse, corrupted imaginations; and yet they presumptuously think they shall be happy enough without it.

But angels and saints think very differently of it. They know that it is the *great mystery of godliness*; the most divine article in the whole system of Revelation; and therefore treat it with holy reverence, as a matter infinitely above their wisdom or contrivance.

How profoundly deep is this amazing theme! Creatures cannot "Fathom the profound of love to man." It is unsearchable in its nature and consequences. The incarnate Redeemer only is able to comprehend the depth, the height, and extent of it.

> "O unexampled love! so vast, so strong,
> So great, so high, so deep, so broad, so long:
> Can finite thought this ocean huge explore,
> Unconscious of a bottom, or a shore."
>
> *Sings Erskine.*

We poor sinful creatures, for whom he became man, know the certainty of this infinite subject, and enjoy the happy fruits of it; but cannot comprehend the reasons which moved the infinite Jehovah to look with such regard on miserable mankind. We see, indeed, the grandest displays of divine love, but cannot survey its extent, or comprehend the utmost bounds of it. We know but a very small part; but what we know, assures us of the whole immeasurable ocean, or unspeakable fullness of the everlasting, immutable, eternal love of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, opened and flowing to us by the means of the incarnation.

It is in truth that subject which completely humbles the pride of fallen, wretched man, therefore proud creatures reject it. The blind reason of great numbers, and great capacities too, cannot see how this can be, that God should become a creature; nevertheless, it is no less certain than existence itself; and we ought to believe it without asking how, and embrace it with the greatest joy and thankfulness.

I need hardly say, it is a duty to make it known to every rational creature capable of receiving benefit from it. As it is the most important doctrine, it is the first duty to open, illustrate, and apply it. The Gospel ministry is established for this purpose, and every part of the Gospel history is an illustration and improvement of it.

Whatever is ascribed to the cross of Christ, flows wholly from the divine nature, being united to, and dwelling in the human. This is indeed literally the soul and body's health:—the weak man's staff:—the sick man's remedy:—the afflicted man's comfort:—the dying man's joy:—the redeemed man's eternal glory.

In this the springs of mercy rise; the fountains of grace overflow; and the rivers of life run through every land. All flows from

GOD MANIFEST IN THE FLESH.

We shall observe, once more, that as the Son of God, in his incarnate state, is acknowledged or neglected, such

will be the state of true religion and piety in the world. That he is the sole author of both, need not be enlarged. But under a full persuasion of the truth of the observation, this work is offered to the church of Christ and the world, in hopes that it may be attended with some good effects to both; to establish the first in the faith once delivered to the saints; and to point out to the second the only way of salvation; that on the whole, glory and honour may be ascribed to his eternal name. That many may have reason to bless and praise the incarnate Saviour for so feeble an effort to illustrate the necessity, the proof of the reality, and the blessing flowing from his incarnation, is the Author's most fervant prayer.

J. M.

Hatherlow, March 4, 1807.

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ERRATA

Occasioned by the Author's distance from the Press.

Vol. I.

Page 15 line 13 read " that simple and absolute necessity."
93 27 for " severe" read " severer."
110 18 for " task" read " taste."
213 1 read " *who* most certainly."
260 7 for " shall" read " shalt."
277 14 for " Carthagineans" read " Carthaginians."
280 11 for " his" read " this."
281 2 for " imposter' read " impostor."
286 5 from bottom, for " stiled by the some" read " styled by some."
288 first line of note, for " Zachariah" read " Zacharias."
306 line 17 dele " as leaving the business."

Vol. II.

202 20 read " and all goodness, tending."
221 23 read " *the* eternal."
233 20 dele second time " this."
234 26 for " tempory" read " temporary."
30 for " hearears" read " hearers."
282 22 for " corruptions" read " corruption."
303 1 dele " said" second time.
323 5 for " *sup*putations" read " *com*putations."

THE

INCARNATION

OF THE

SON OF GOD, &c.

Part First.

THE NECESSITY OF THE INCARNATION ESTABLISHED AND ILLUSTRATED.

DISCOURSE I.

THERE is no subject within the reach of created understandings, of equal importance with the INCARNATION of the Son of God: it is an act of God, which may justly arrest the admiration of heaven and earth: the whole system of divine Revelation, so fully laid down in the sacred Scriptures, revolves round this point. Every divine doctrine, and religious service, looks to, and is connected with it. The holy apostle of the Gentiles, with much propriety, calls it the great mystery of godliness, 1 Tim. iii. 16. And the apostle of the circumcision says, it is among the things which the angels desire to look into,

1 Pet. i. 12. It was matter of serious and deep contemplation to all the holy prophets, who had, from the beginning of the world, foretold it.

It was, throughout the patriarchal ages, an object of faith, which the church did certainly believe would, in due time, be realized. It was the substance of typical representation in the Jewish ritual, by which the faith of God's people was greatly supported, until the substance of their shadows appeared: and to Christians it is a subject of undoubted and most glorious certainty.

The beloved disciple of our Lord begins his history with a clear view of his divinity, in union with his humanity: assuring us, that "The word was with God, and that the word was God:" that he "Was made flesh (or was incarnate*), and dwelt among us:" that he is the creator of all things, and the only begotten Son, which is in the the bosom of the Father: he hath declared him, *i. e.* revealed, or made him known, both in the glories of his nature, and the councils of his will, which Revelation may either respect the Father's giving the Son to be made of a woman, or the Son's revealing the Father, and making known to the church his manifold grace in all the stages of his incarnate state.

* The word incarnate is compounded of *in* and *caro*, and signifies in flesh, and when applied to the eternal Son of God, it means his assumption of human nature into personal union with the divine, which is called the hypostatical union.

God manifest in the flesh, is a mystery that is seen of angels: they know that it is matter of fact, and adore the divinity in humanity; though the nature and manner of it will be eternally mysterious to them. It will engage their admiration and praise to all eternity; and they will rejoice in it, together with the happy souls who shall enjoy the benefits of it for ever. It is a subject next in magnitude to the mystery of the divine persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, subsisting in one undivided essence: a mystery this, which is hid in God, far above the comprehension of creatures. They who have the nearest access to the Deity, know the existence of this unfathomable truth, that God is one in nature, but subsists in three persons. So, also, the incarnation of the Son of God is an act of divine compassion in favour of sinful and miserable men, which every glorified spirit knows, but cannot perfectly explain. Every manifestation of the divine nature and operations, when contemplated by angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect, may justly constrain them to adopt the exclamation of Paul: "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out," Rom. xi. 38. And of David: "How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings," Psalm xxxvi. 7.

The divine and human natures of the Son of God, together with the offices he sustains, as the only Mediator between God and man, are subjects of the highest importance to the Christian. His faith in these, and open acknowledgements of them, distinguish him from every other description of men. "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God; every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him," 1 John iv. 2, 3, 9.

The existence and support of the Christian religion rest upon the divinity of its Author. This is the true foundation of the Christian's hope and joy. The human nature and offices of this divine Person, are the great medium by which he enjoys fellowship with the Father and the Son Jesus Christ. The eternal Creator is, now, no other way accessible to sinful and guilty creatures but *by means of such manifestation as the incarnation exhibits.*

The person of the blessed Redeemer is distinctly pointed out by the character of the WORD. The term LOGOS signifies, also, wisdom or reason; accordingly CHRIST is called both the wisdom and the word of God. He is the *wisdom* of God, say several of the fathers, considering him

in *his pre-existence* before all worlds; and so he is compared to *thought*, which is silent resting in the mind. And he is the *word* of God, considering him in his *incarnate* state; and so he is compared to outward speech, whereby he reveals the Father to us.

The word was made flesh, saith the same holy apostle. God the word appeared on earth: he was made man by assuming human nature into personal union with himself, in order to carry on the design of mercy in the salvation of men. The human nature of the logos is most usually called flesh, or a body; to express his infinite condescension in taking upon him even the meanest part of man, with all the natural infirmities of the body. This shows us, that he came to recover that flesh from corruption which, by Adam's sin, was made obnoxious to death; and that not the soul only, but the body likewise, shall be raised to eternal life. It assures us also, that he had a true human body, or real flesh, in opposition to such as, in the first ages, pretended that it was only a phantom, or appearance of flesh. But his being made flesh, was not by his divine nature's being changed into the human, but by the human nature's being personally united with the divine in himself; by which personal union, he did not cease to be what he was before, *viz.* God; but became what he was not before, that is man; and so both natures constituted but one person in him. Hence,

in infinite wisdom, he is constituted a Mediator between God and man, and worthily adored as such*.

His dwelling among us, evidently refers to his appointed residence among the Iraelites, in the SHECHINAH, the shining cloud of glory, which was the glory of the temple, and all its sacred offices. It was a lively figure of his incarnation, and abode on earth for a certain time†.

This term, WORD, employed to characterise the Son of God, seems peculiar to the writings of this highly-favoured apostle. He makes more frequent use of it than any of the inspired writers; and the reason of it seems to be taken from a popular opinion among the Jews, that the word of God, was the same as God. Their most noted writers very frequently call the Messiah MEMRA, the word of Jehovah: a word in the Hebrew of the same mean-

* Some writers say, "that we, Calvinists, pay no divine adoration to the human nature of CHRIST, but only to his godhead." This is founded on misapprehension of the person of the SON of GOD. Our worship to the Lord Jesus Christ, is to his undivided person as God-man. "Let all the angels of God worship him," Heb. i. was said of the Messiah. This, had it been to the godhead alone, would have been unnecessary: this was worshipped without any command. But the Son of God is a new exhibition of the LORD of all in the flesh, which must be worshipped by angels, and all creatures, unitedly with the godhead. When we worship the Son of God, we address him in his united undivided person, God-man: "The author, or Prince of Life, whom God raised from the dead, Acts iii. 17.

† See Dr. Guise's Paraphrase on John i. 1. 14.

ing as Logos in the Greek language. They speak of many things in the Old Testament, said to be done by the Lord, as done by that word of the Lord, and understood that word to be the Messiah personally. Therefore, to convince the Jews that Jesus Christ was truly the promised Messiah, and to stop the growing heresies of those who denied his divinity, he uses this term to assure them, that the Memra their fathers believed in, the eternal Logos incarnate, or manifested in the flesh, is as really God as the Father, and as essentially divine as before his incarnation.

As the names of God are expressive either of his nature or relations to us, it is not improbable, that the second person in the Godhead was revealed to the church as the MEMRA, or the word of Jehovah, on account of his intended incarnation. For there could be no communication of ideas between one man and another, without the intervention of this Mediator. Hence appears the necessity of the uncreated divine LOGOS, taking upon him the nature of man, that he might effect a reconciliation between the offended Creator and guilty creatures.

Without humanity we cannot see how he could sustain, or usefully execute, the offices which are indispensably necessary to the redemption and salvation of men; nor could he have been a sacrifice for sin, had he not been truly man. His human nature suffering for our sins, on the altar of

the divine nature, makes that sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour to God, which is the procuring cause of our reconciliation and acceptance with him. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement, or reconciliation," Rom. v. 10, 11.

The truth of this fact has been opposed and ridiculed by the enemies of Christianity from the beginning of the Gospel: but has also been as ably defended by the fathers of the church. "Gregory Neyssen, brother to the famous Basil, defended the incarnation against Pagans, Jews, and heretics. "He shows," says the historian, "that man is fallen and corrupted, and can be recovered only by his Creator; and hence that word who created him, came himself to raise him again: he shows, also, that to be born of a virgin, to eat, to drink, to die, and be buried, are not things unbecoming the holy nature of God, because there is no sin in them; and that the divinity, united to man, lost not its perfections, any more than the soul loses its properties by its union with the body." *Milner's Hist. cent. 4th, page* 270.

The incarnation of the eternal Son of God is so fully established in the sacred Scriptures, and the nature of things seems so clearly to point out the

necessity of it, that an attempt at an illustration of a subject, confessedly superior to all created intellects, may be charged with high presumption. But in mitigation of the charge, we may be allowed to say, that we cannot be too well acquainted with what is revealed, and may be known of it; we cannot admire it too fervently; nor be too much interested in the blessings and consequences of it. Though we cannot fathom the depth of the divine counsels, nor comprehend their infinite extent; yet we may be allowed to meditate on them, and from the great mystery of godliness draw divine consolation and joy. Our illustration, therefore, shall contain three views of the subject:—1. The NECESSITY of it, as it may be gathered from the present state of things, which is disorder and confusion, and must remain so without divine interposition. 2. The PROOF and REALITY of it, as exhibited in the whole Scripture, from the beginning of time to that happy event. 3. The happy consequences of it, in all the BLESSINGS of this present life, and, particularly, of that which is to come.

This is the plan by which we mean to carry on our work: the foundation on which we shall build all our sentiments. Natural and revealed truth seem to unite their importance and influence here: we must gather our materials from both, and illustrate so great and sublime a subject in the best manner we can; humbly intreating that divine

direction so needful to guide and support the most enlightened; much more to aid a mind so feeble, an imagination so wavering, and meditations so imperfect, in prosecuting these very interesting particulars, in which the glory of Emmanuel, and the comfort of his people are so much concerned. Here we may exhibit a summary of divinity; an extract of the system of Revelation; a compendious view of time and eternity; with the most important transactions performed on this earthly stage.

But we shall endeavour not to darken counsel by words without meaning, and in simplicity and godly sincerity, commend the truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

The following practical reflections arise out of this preliminary view of the subject; we see

1. The eternal Creator's regard, manifested in the most condescending and endearing manner to the distressed miseries of mankind. His love and pity are gloriously displayed in such a way, as may justly excite the wonder, and call forth the praises of the intelligent creation. It is the wonder of wonders, that God should become man! But it is certain, however wonderful,

We may very properly here exclaim with Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, which was a figure of our Redeemer's body—"But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth!" Behold heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him! how much less a material habita-

tion! The heaven is his throne, and the earth his footstool; nevertheless, he looks into the poor and contrite spirit, to enrich, to heal, and save it.

2. We have here the clearest illustration of our fallen state, and the evil of sin. If we were in the state in which we were created, there would be no occasion for the manifestation of the divine nature in the human. But, such is our condition, and the woeful consequences of it, that no less a person could save us than the Son of God. And that he may be a complete Saviour, it is necessary that he should be found in fashion as a man. "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation; and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor." Our Redeemer is possessed of the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and of all the excellent qualifications of humanity: he is, therefore, able to save to the uttermost.

3. This doctrine is worthy of all acceptation, notwithstanding the incomprehensible sublimity of its nature: "It is a faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." After Paul was converted, he saw the true cause of life in Jesus Christ; sinners, guilty transgressors of the divine law, stood liable to the just punishment threatened against sins: the awful miseries which were thick around them, made such a Saviour ne-

cessary. He came: he was worthy to engage in such a cause; and the cause was worthy of him. He engaged in the most affectionate manner, in behalf of the most afflicted and miserable. His person, doctrine, and services, are most excellently suited to our woeful circumstances; and are, therefore, highly worthy of our acceptation. We cannot accept a higher favour, for a higher cannot be offered; nor is any doctrine of greater importance than this.

4. The fallen and ruined creature is not at liberty, but at his everlasting peril, to reject the blessed Saviour, and the sublime truths which concern his person: his low humiliation can be no ground of objection to the faith of a humbled sinner; the remedy sent from heaven to heal, and save our souls, cannot, with safety, be despised; it is perfectly suitable; and no other can be offered, or prove effectual: they, therefore, who set at nought this matter of fact, reject the counsel of God against themselves, and turn the greatest displays of mercy and grace, into an aggravation of their own guilt and condemnation.

Let Christians imitate the eastern sages, who came from distant countries to worship the child born, the son given. As they offered their gifts, so let us present our grateful affections, and joyful adorations; uniting our cheerful songs with the multitude of the heavenly host, which, upon the happy event of the Saviour's birth, celebrated the

glory of incarnate Deity. The angel said unto the shepherds — "Behold! I bring unto you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people:— for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour; which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you, ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And, suddenly, there was with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill towards men." Luke ii. 10—15.

DISCOURSE II.

The Importance of the Subject argued from the Nature of Man.

The multitude of the heavenly host attending the birth of the holy child Jesus, reflects such dignity on his divine person, as is not to be equalled in any records. They saw the condescending Son of God now born of a woman. The angel Gabriel had announced to the blessed virgin, that by the power of the highest overshadowing her, she should conceive a son, and call his name Jesus; that is a Saviour. Accordingly, he is born at the time and place stated in prophesy. The armies of heaven follow their sovereign, and celebrate his

INCARNATION; they publish his birth in the plains of Bethlehem, and the watchful shepherds hear them sing.

A matter so astonishingly wonderful, demands the most serious consideration of mankind! The Creator of all assuming the nature of a creature! We contemplate the Author of nature and religion! A life of the utmost importance to all living! A life, infinitely more necessary to the salvation of souls, than the life of Joseph, for the preservation of Egypt; or of Moses, for the redemption of Israel.

The redemption of men by this person, is the design and reason of his nativity. He is born to establish a new system of things, respecting our spiritual, immortal state. Hence every thing attending him, in the way of providence, shall promote this work in his hands. It is that new creation which regenerates the old: the first has respect to the existence of beings, which manifest the eternal power and godhead of their Creator, and are everlasting monuments of his natural perfections; it shall show that he is: but the second shall gloriously manifest the moral perfections of Deity, and particularly the source of all moral excellence, THE LOVE OF GOD*. This is the unfathomable, boundless ocean, in which we shall find the motive that gives existence to the scheme, by

* It may be needful, for the sake of some readers, to explain the distinction between the natural and moral perfections of God: by the first are understood the immensity, eternity, omni-

which the most unworthy and ill-deserving creatures are restored to happiness. It is here we are to look for the principal part of the necessity we propose to treat of; it is this that gives existence, form, and effect to the plan of redemption, in which the INCARNATION is a chief and leading article. This is the new creation so highly celebrated by the holy prophets and apostles, and which is worthy of the Son of God to undertake. Herein he does all things after the counsel of his own will, to the praise of the glory of his grace.

The necessity which we have now before us, is not that absolute necessity and simple which there is for the being of a God; nor a natural necessity, as if the Creator were obliged from the nature of things to concert measures for the redemption of man: but we mean a gratuitous necessity, arising from the love of God, to be magnified in the person of the Son, towards Adam and his miserable posterity. Hence it is a necessity of infallible certainty, which shall as inevitably accomplish the end proposed, as it is certain the beings and circumstances which require it exist. *See Fleming's Loganth. lib.* 3. *c.* 3. *p.* 254.

science, omnipotence, and supremacy of Deity, and all other excellencies not communicable to creatures.

By the second, those of which angels and men are partakers—as wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. We call them moral, because they are necessary to every good work, required by what is called the moral law. *See Clark on the Being and Attributes of God.*

Necessity then, in this sense of it, is such an indissoluble concatenation of sundry causes and effects, as has a native tendency to secure the certainty of all events; so of the *incarnation* and its consequences. *Toplady's Scheme*, p. 13, 14.

Our first view of this wonderful act of grace, requires that we should consider attentively, and endeavour to illustrate clearly, the necessity of it; as it may be gathered from the present state, or nature of things. Things in disorder and confusion, which must remain so without divine interposition. This will appear on considering,

1. That lost and miserable mankind could not, by any other way, be saved and made happy.

2. That the eternal perfections of Deity, could not be glorified so much by any other means, if they could at all have been known.

3. The dignity of the divine government, and the honour of the righteous laws of God made it necessary.

4. That sin and sorrow could no otherwise be destroyed. It was therefore highly expedient that the Son of God should be incarnate, or made flesh; that he might restore and put all things in order, respecting God and sinful man.

1st. That the human nature is fallen, and lost in sin, is manifest from the miseries which every man endures; and he must have remained in this state to all eternity, if the Son of God had not come to save him. It was no more possible that the sinful

and guilty creature could deliver himself from the state into which he had fallen, than to make himself another creature, or to create a new world: hence the obvious necessity of his Creator assuming the human nature, since he only could be his Saviour.

It is not irrelative to our subject, but proper, that we take notice of the primitive condition in which the human nature was formed, and the dignity of our state. Man was called into existence the last of all creatures: he was appointed the governor of the whole: he had capacity and powers above all. He was endowed with the most consummate wisdom, the highest goodness, the purest affections, strictest integrity, sublimest piety, and most unlimited authority a creature could enjoy. He is a wonderful piece of divine workmanship, on whose formation a counsel of the divine Persons is called; saying, "Let us make man in our own image." He is, by some, called the NEXUS between matter and spirit, being a partaker of both. He is a spirit, created in righteousness and true holiness; like his Creator, the first, the highest, the purest, most holy spirit. God is a spirit infinite, eternal, and unchangeable.

We do not mean to enlarge on man's character in his state of perfection: it is sufficient to our purpose, that we take notice of some leading features, by which he is distinguished from all other earthly creatures. He is not only a spirit, as we

have said, but as such, is a rational, immortal, and responsible being. A brief view of these, will help us in the illustration of the necessity before us.

1. By reason man is distinguished from all living creatures in the earth :—he has the power of exercising his spiritual faculties in a proper manner to a happy end. This high prerogative sets him above all material beings; he is able to think, to conceive, to judge, and to determine on the means by which he may arrive at the conclusion of his intended purpose :—he looks into himself and admires his wonderful construction; he contemplates his adorable Creator, who hath called him into existence; he looks on each hand through the universe, and observes the amazing effects of infinite reason : the evident footsteps of designing intelligence are every where visible. Infinity and eternity are equally certain to his reflecting astonished mind : reason compels him to worship his Creator, the author and upholder of all things.

Nature in all her amazing varieties, is the proper object on which he may exercise his reason : with all his intellectual powers he cannot rise higher, nor descend lower, than the various and complicated links of nature's chain will permit him. The subjects of divine revelation are too transcendant; he cannot form a conception of them, till they are handed down, and laid before him, by the God of grace and mercy. Hence the

subject before us, I mean the incarnation, cannot be investigated by the principles of human reason, but it is highly reasonable to believe it, as an act within the comprehension of infinite reason and omnipotence.

2. Man is an immortal creature. His soul is not subject to dissolution as his body is. A spirit hath not material parts as the body: death only dissolves the union between soul and body. The infallible teacher assures us that "A spirit hath not flesh and bones;" that is, there is nothing material in its nature. It is that creature which is formed by the breath of God, and it is his pleasure that it shall live for ever.

Nothing is immortal by nature but God. He only hath immortality; and by virtue of this glorious perfection, he can give this most precious privilege to any creature, or to every creature, or to no creature, as it seems best to his infinite wisdom.

The human nature is created with a capacity of eternal duration; but it is the will of God alone that makes it immortal. It depends upon him for its existence in a separate state through all eternity, as much as it does through the few years of time. And since he hath no where said that the soul shall not exist, but, on the contrary, hath revealed a separate state of eternal rewards or punishments; we may, from hence, justly conclude, that man is immortal. Connected with this, we are

assured that the body of each soul shall be reunited to it again at the resurrection; and that they shall be immortal companions in an eternal world.

Besides; why should the Son of God be incarnate, and come into our nature? What satisfactory reason can be assigned for his deep humiliation and death, separate from the immortality of those whom he represented, and for whom he acted? It would seem unworthy of infinite perfections to be concerned in a temporary plan, such as the whole of divine Revelation must be, if man be not immortal. It would seem unworthy of his eternal wisdom, to be moved or influenced by his love for those wretched creatures, to redeem and save them at so high a price, if there remained any doubt of their eternal duration. If they could ever lose the benefits he intends them to enjoy; and if it could be fairly and fully proved, that man is not immortal; it would sink the doctrine we have before us, into deserved insignificance, if not utter contempt.

3. Since we see so clearly, that the soul is a reasonable, immortal spirit; we may take notice of the state in which it hath pleased the Almighty to place man, that is a state of reponsibility. He is placed at the head, and has authority from his Creator, to direct every creature on the earth. As a steward he is answerable for his stewardship: having received such distinguishing marks of his eternal Father's goodness, in bestowing upon him

these great and exalted qualifications, it is highly proper he should be responsible to him for the use and application of them.

It seems contrary to the nature and fitness of things, so well established in every part of the creation, that the Author of them, who is possessed of every possible perfection, should exempt a reasonable creature from a duty so necessary to the honour, and dignity of his government. Such exemption would amount to making him a god; imparting to a mere creature, a precious jewel of the eternal crown: nor would it befit a finite creature to be so privileged; because in such a state, it would have no rule to determine between good and evil. The necessary sovereignty of God, excludes the idea from the intelligent mind, that any spiritual, reasonable, immortal creature, should be in a state not accountable to him. Spirits are capable of contrivance and action, of life and enjoyment. By the Eternal Spirit they live, move, and act. To him, therefore, they ought to give an account of all their actions, and an answer to all his questions. This is a duty of nature, the most becoming of all natural duties; it is a matter of right due to the King eternal; the cause of justice, which the judge of all the earth will maintain.

This applies to the whole man, and to all his actions at all times; every man must give an account of himself to God, for all that he has received. He is responsible, as a spiritual agent, for

the exercise of his mind in all things of a spiritual nature, as well as in those which concern the body, whether they relate to God, his neighbour, or himself.

Hence the divine will, clearly revealed, appears to be the necessary supreme rule, to the highest as well as the lowest orders of rational, immortal creatures. Upon the whole of this, stands the certainty of a future judgment.

On the whole it may be enquired; is it reasonable to suppose, that a being so richly endowed as the preceding parts of man's character represent him, and who is capable of forming designs in statuary, painting, &c., which shall continue uninjured for many generations, and even seem to outlive the ravages of time; is it consistent with reason to imagine, that a creature, which can produce such effects, should not exist so long as its own works? He is constantly improving; there is no end of his inventions; he is always aspiring at higher attainments, and is never satisfied with the degree of his pursuits. All other creatures go no further than to a certain, but limited, degree of improvement, to which they are led by, what we call, natural instinct; but man is unlimited. He can accommodate himself to, and assist, all below him, and every creature may, and in most cases does, enjoy the benefits of his assistance, whilst none of them assist, or succour him of themselves.

If the earth, and all the furniture with which it

is so richly decorated, were created for the convenience and happiness of man, it is hard to conceive why the less should survive the greater: why dead matter should continue so many ages, and the spiritual possessor so few years. Hence we must draw this fair conclusion, that the creature in which such powers are found, and is capable of producing such important effects, as the arts, sciences, and mechanics manifest; and these growing, with improvements, to succeeding generations, must exist in another state, different from the present, and therefore is immortal; otherwise the effect is greater than the cause, which is absurd.

Behold a Son of the eternal King entered into his new-built palace!—How noble the inhabitant! —The brightest image of his Creator!—How holy and happy his mind!—How universal his dominion!—How supremely great his state and dignity!

His habitation is worthy of him; how stately and magnificent are all the apartments of it! It displays, very clearly, a divine architect; nothing is wanting either to the inhabitant, or the house, to engage the heavenly world to maintain a frequent and familiar correspondence. The God of love has very exalted pleasures in this dear object of his parental regard; angels, who dwell in the immediate divine presence, are his companions; in this mansion they sing together, and shine in

beauty as the morning stars; all the sons of God shout for joy, Job xxxviii. 7.

DISCOURSE III.

The fallen State of Man shows the Necessity of the Incarnation.

We have seen the human nature in the perfection of beauty, placed in an honourable state by the beneficent and righteous Creator. Man seems that distinguished creature, in whom all the perfections of the eternal God shall be most illustriously magnified; it appears he has connected his highest glory with the person and circumstances of this immortal creature.

That man is fallen from his state we may surely believe: that he is miserable we constantly see. How the change was affected we learn in the history of it recorded by Moses. We shall not attempt to prove a truth so fully established, and so well understood. The existence of evil, and its dreadful fruits, in our first parents, and in all their offspring, is argument sufficient for our present purpose. We cannot conceive any necessity for the manifestation of God in the flesh, on any other principle than the fallen, sinful, and lost state of human nature. But if this be admitted, it will

afford a satisfactory reason why the Son of God should be incarnate to save him.

We may also observe here, that God did all that was requisite to prevent the transgression, and consequent guilt of our first parents: they were furnished with every personal qualification, needful to perfect obedience; he settled them in a delightful well-furnished residence.

> Beneath them with new wonder now they view,
> To all delight of human sense expos'd,
> In narrow room Nature's whole wealth; yea, more,
> A heav'n on earth. MILTON, lib. 4.

When he left them to the freedom of their own will, and supported them with means of standing, he is perfectly clear from any charge of being the author of sin. In giving them that freedom he was good; in leaving them to that choice, which freedom always implies, he was just. In directing them to the right use of those means by which they might have stood, he manifested his holiness and ahhorrence of sin: so far it was needful to go, but no further, in order to prevent the fall. It does not seem consistent with free agency to proceed further.

It was in eating the forbidden fruit that our first parents became guilty: and in this act of disobedience their whole posterity were involved. This is clearly stated by the apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, chap. 5; and what he asserts is

confirmed by the unvarying united evidence of all ages, supported by divine history. It is necessary to our illustration, that the necessity we treat of may more fully appear, that we should consider in what respects fallen man is a sinner: we, therefore, take notice of the imputation of sin in the first place: then, secondly, of that inclination to it, which is manifest in all: thirdly, the actual rebellion of which every man is guilty. These three particulars, explained in some tolerable degree, will illustrate the subject before us.

First; The imputation of sin. The sin here intended is that act of disobedience against the clearly revealed will of God, of which our first parents were guilty, in eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge, after he had said unto them, ye shall not eat of it, lest ye die. By Adam's disobedience the whole world is guilty; the guilt of his offence is stated, or accounted, to each of his descendants; and, therefore, they all die by virtue of the fault which he committed.

The imputation of this offence, affords a just reason why all his offspring should die; hence the infallible writer, before alluded to, asserts, that in Adam all die; and, again, through the offence of one many be dead; that is, all preceding generations. This doctrine does not stand upon our natural relation to him as our original parent; though we sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression; but on that federal, or covenant

relation, into which he entered for himself and family; the seal, or sacrament, of which covenant was the tree of knowledge, and the fruit thereof*. Had he not been our covenant head, as well as our natural, we might have escaped this imputation. In that case, himself only would have suffered death, and all his posterity survived, and none suffered by death unto this day. Life indeed must have been miserable, as every person knows experimentally; and, perhaps, might have been more wretched, from the infinite multitudes, which must, by this time, have been on the face of the earth.

It does not appear that death would have ever been known to the human race but for this offence; and we conclude from the effects which it has upon all, that every one is concerned in it: it is imputed to every man, and die he must.

* That Adam was in a state of probation, for a certain time, for himself and posterity, may be readily admitted. And so long as this state continued, the tree of knowledge was the tree of death. But when this time expired, the trial, or probation, was finished; and we may well suppose that the fruit of that tree was no longer interdicted.

As soon too we may be allowed to say, as the transgression was finished, the tree lost its power of death; for it was a sacramental not a poisonous tree, as some have represented it. The death threatened was not of the body only, but also of the soul which could not be poisoned with fruits: and death is ascribed only to sin, Romans vi. 23, and v. 12, which is disobedience to the clearly revealed will of God.

We must observe, that this sin only is imputed, and none else; because Adam acted here, not in a private capacity but in the name, and on the behalf of all his offspring: but as soon as he sinned that federal union and relationship totally ceased. He was no more their representative, to act for them, in the covenant of life by works. He immediately stood in the same place as all his progeny, having nothing to do with any but himself. He made himself a sinner, and forfeited his trust; he is, therefore, set aside, and another put in his place, that is JESUS CHRIST, by whom mercy shall reign, and the unspeakable goodness of the Eternal shall be manifested towards man.

The doctrine of imputation adds a lustre to the necessity we treat of. It was one thing the Son of God had in view, when made in the likeness of sinful flesh, that he might submit to the imputation of sin. We are assured he was made sin for us; that he bore our sins in his own body; that he suffered the just for the unjust. These, and numberless other testimonies, assure us that sin was imputed to him. Whatever is imputable to those whom he represents, in the covenant of life by grace, he voluntarily takes it all upon himself, and becomes answerable to the law and justice of heaven for the consequences. Whatever sin is imputed or reckoned unto us by the offence of Adam, is tranferred to our incarnate Redeemer, who was able to bear, and cancel the guilt of it. See how

necessary it is, from the nature of this case, that a divine person should be found in fashion as a man. By this imputation, he delivers believers from the woful effects of Adam's transgression, as to the state and safety of their souls; and their bodies shall enjoy a complete deliverance at the resurrection.

To finish this particular, we shall sum up the whole in the words of a pious paraphrast: "The imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, involving them in misery and death, necessarily implies the imputation of his obedience to them for justification and eternal life. Eternal life would have been due to him and them, as a debt to his obedience, according to the condition of the covenant of works. Our title to etertnal life and happiness would have stood on the perfect obedience of our covenant head: but this ground of happiness being swept away by the deluge of sin, there remains nothing but death for all who trust to the covenant of works. Our everlasting felicity must have flowed to us through Adam, as the head of communication, in some such manner as it does now, through Christ the second Adam, who was incarnate, and born of a woman, for this purpose, that he might fill the place our first head had lost, and so become our kinsman Redeemer*."

Secondly; On a general view of mankind there is nothing more manifest than an inclination, in every person without exception, to embrace and follow

* Guise.

those things which are contrary to the revealed will of God. This evil propensity we have received from our first parents. Adam propagated his race in his own fallen likeness; and, like him, all fly from God, and endeavour to hide their persons, and their crimes, from his omniscient eye. How evidently does this appear in all who follow the unhallowed vanities of this world, and particularly in those characters who live in avowed contempt of God, and take his name in vain. The human mind is disposed to evil, rather than good. Here we see the awful effects of transgression; the heart dreadfully depraved; yea, desperately wicked. We have the assurance of this from the clearest demonstrations: language seems defective in terms to express the evil: nature has not images sufficient to paint the ruined state of the soul: it is altogether become nauseous and abominable in the presence of the Searcher of hearts.

Very early did the wickedness of man become great in the earth: "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually; and it repented the Lord that he had made man upon the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." What a heavy complaint; so soon too after the creation; made by the Creator himself, who pronounced all things very good when he had finished his work! But after the first transgression, sin increased as men multiplied, and grew stronger in every generation.

By the fall, evil dispositions entered the heart; they cleave to the soul, and it embraces them; it cultivates and improves them, as if they were really necessary to its existence; they become natural, and, therefore, are easy, familiar, and pleasant.

The heart is the fountain of all moral evil: "From within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, thefts, blasphemies," &c. This is a true testimony of the evil heart, stated by the author of the former complaint, almost four thousand years after. It is not a partial, but a general evidence, and applied to every descendant of Adam. The Searcher of hearts needed no information concerning the inclination, which is paramount in every heart; but this information, given by him respecting it, is an incontestible proof of the certainty of its evil disposition. The evil inclinations of man, his principles, designs, motives, pursuits, wishes, and most secret desires, are all naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. He tries the heart and the reins, and sees the habitual inclination of the fallen mind to every evil word and work. See how full the evidence, that man is a sinful creature! He is full of sin! His heart is wholly set in him to do evil. The sacred Scriptures are crowded with testimonies in proof of this point. All history illustrates it. Every nation and generation proves it so fully that we need not enlarge.

Thus we learn, from the best authority, that

man is a sinful creature: every son of Adam hath broken the covenant like him; therefore death passeth upon all men, in whom all have sinned; that is, in Adam; the one man, by whom sin entered into the world.

If evil dispositions had been implanted in us, and the first transgression not imputed, it might be supposed, as before hinted, that death could have no dominion over us; because it was attached to that particular offence. It is true, the sinful nature deserves punishment even unto death: it is infinitely more awful to be of an evil, or sinful, disposition, which is the malady and disease of the soul, than to be transgressors only by imputation, which but affects the body and its temporal enjoyments. Suppose, then, the imputation of sin, which we have said is the cause of death, without the evil inclination or disposition to it; and we may suppose the body suffering by death, without any injury or hurt to the soul, according to the threatened penalty. But suppose, on the other hand, that there is no imputation of that offence, and that sin is all implanted by the means of eating the forbidden fruit, or any other means; we may then suppose the body would not have been liable to death, but the soul filled with sinful propensities, must have continued in its deathless body for ever; and in it suffered the just punishments of its evil sinful inclinations, in which also the body must have been a partner, because of its

necessary obedience to the soul: it must be subservient to all its inclinations, dispositions, pursuits, joys, or woes.

The imputation of Adam's sin, in eating the forbidden fruit, to every person of his race, shows us the just cause of death, and all the miseries which either precede, or follow it. Nothing can prevent death. Every son and daughter of guilty Adam must die. Neither the treasures of the rich, nor the virtues of physic, can preserve life when the appointed hour arrives. This is matter of fact, and needs no further elucidation. Inherent sin is that spiritual malady which reigns in all the soul, to the eternal exclusion of peace, holiness, and happiness. It is an evil which nothing can destroy, but that grace which reigns in righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Hence, to remove both, it appears indispensably necessary that he should come; be found among men; and take both their nature and cause upon himself. As the only one who is able to save, it is necessary that he should be incarnate, be reputed, and suffer as a transgressor, that he may destroy the cause of death; which cause must also be imputed to him before he can suffer. But he suffers the just for the unjust.

Thirdly; We just take notice that the human nature is in actual rebellion against God: this is so clear, that no time need be taken up in pointing out, or proving it.

The prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now ruleth in the children of disobedience, leads the human mind captive at his will. This is the cause of that universal inclination to sin, which we have spoken of, and is a demonstration of the total depravity of the soul. What can more fully evince that man is a sinner than a want of conformity to the mind of God, and of submission to his revealed will. But this want of submission, affords but one half of the proof on which we build the charge of rebellion. He is not only at enmity, but opposes, and takes up arms against God: he is not a negative, but a positive rebel; not passive, but active in his rebellion. He lays out all his abilities, time, and strength, contrary to the laws he ought to obey. This is a true charge, founded on divine testimony, which declares that they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, and were haters of God: there is no fear of God before their eyes; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

From these causes we see all the miseries which afflict mankind; every one is afflicted, because he is a sinful creature. The first-rate characters, and the highest stations in fallen nature, do not exempt their possessors from sufferings, pains, and afflictions. This may be observed in two things, very perceivable in every rational mind; the first is in what it FEELS; and the second in its FEARS.

It is of those painful sensibilities which afflict

the soul we now speak. Those which concern its own nature, circumstances, and operations. It feels wants and deficiencies which it cannot supply; it has no true satisfaction in any visible created thing: it is ever seeking happiness, but cannot find it; because it has forsaken the true cause and means of it. Its state is truly afflictive, wandering in darkness, in comparative ignorance of all things, in the high way of destruction, without the knowledge of God and salvation. Wandering like a sheep in an open desart, without guide or protector, ready to be entangled and torn by its enemies.

The keen storms of inward horror, often afflict it with the terrors of destruction. The mind feels painful, under a sense of present circumstances; but knows not how to remedy them. It labours hard to little or no profit; deep contrivances; well concerted plans; and prudent prosecutions of them, often, very often, are disconcerted before they are well begun, and bring miserable disappointment, and vexation into the soul. How does it feel in this state of mortification! How does it fret, and grieve, and repine! How is it tormented with inward discontent!

The miseries of the mind arise from a sense of spiritual loss: the soul has lost all the divine treasure with which it was enriched; the recollection of which fills it with the keenest sensations, and causes it to weep in secret. I need not say, that

sins are the cause of every misery to the body as well as the mind. They are partners in guilt, and must be in punishment. But how seldom do unbelievers think of, or consider this, ignorantly supposing that all is the effect of chance. Though it be certain, nothing can come on any but by divine appointment, Matth. x. 29. 30.

Again; we see the miserable state of man in the *fears* which oppress him; and these, very frequently, without foundation. He experiences present misery, and he looks forward with dread to the future.

> "Man on the point of his own fancy falls,
> And feels a thousand deaths in fearing one." YOUNG.

The fear of suffering, is, in many cases, as bad as the cause from whence it comes, and sometimes worse; because, it is often observed, that the thing dreaded, is not so bad as our weak fears foreboded. Hence it is well observed, that fear hath torment. This tormenting fear is quite destitute of any principle of divine love in the sinful creature; it is a presumptive evidence of the enmity of the heart, and full proof of our miserable existence as unbelievers.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God:—nothing is more certain than that he will take an account of every creature of the human race; and the time when this shall take place, is called, the fearful looking for of judgment.

and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversary.

Notwithstanding reprobate wicked men, may, through a course of iniquity, banish from their thoughts all consideration of eternal futurity, that they may drink in iniquity without torment; yet, they cannot divest themselves of the fears, that the threatenings against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men may be true; yea, in the nature of things, cannot but be true. While the immortal soul has any sensibility, or conscience any exercise, the mind of a sinner cannot be divested of fear.

If it be necessary to remove all this misery which we see afflicting every person, and to bring the wandering creature to God and happiness; then, the necessity we treat of appears very manifest. No other shepherd could restore the sheep which were gone astray. No bishop, inferior to the Son of God, could save the souls of men. Hence, if any must be saved, it is through his coming; and, he came, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

He comes "Not to condemn the world," already under the sentence of condemnation, but to save it. How necessary to effect this benign purpose, that he should have a body like our own, that in the dress of full humanity, he might have access to every man, and every man might, with freedom and without fear, approach him; therefore, "He

veil'd his godhead in a veil of our inferior clay*." That he might be qualified to bear the imputation of his sin, and suffer death in his stead; that he might be fitted to converse with, and instruct him, and by this means make him sensible of the awful consequences of those evil inclinations, and rebellious dispositions, which lead him from God and true happiness; that he might communicate to his immortal, miserable soul, those divine principles, which are founded in the love of God and right reason, which should restore him again to the enjoyment of real felicity, and deliver him from those infernal sensations, by which he is absorbed in misery, distress, vexation, distraction, and despair; that he might deliver him from every tormenting fear, which must ever haunt and follow him, respecting his future state, and eternal condemnation.

These are consequences so unavoidable to fallen miserable sinners, that we need not enlarge. But for a conclusion of this discourse we may observe, that man must have remained to all eternity in this state of wretchedness, but for the manifestation of the Son of God in our nature. Had it not been for the eternal purpose of the Father to give his Son; and of the Son to become man, that he might restore mankind; it does not appear that there would have been any difference between the human race, and the angels who kept not their first

* Watts.

estate. But the difference, which sovereign grace hath made, is noticed with a special emphasis, and assures us, that " He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. For it behoved him, in all things, to be made like unto his brethren." It was necessary that he should become man, that man might obtain redemption through his blood.

Thus the God of Israel comes to visit and redeem his people; and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David. As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began; that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us. To perform the mercy " Promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant. The oath which he sware unto our Father Abraham; that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness, and righteousness before him, all the days of our life."

How wonderful the condescending manner in which the Redeemer accommodates himself to the circumstances of man! He lays aside his own personal glories, and veils his essential divinity, that no poor, trembling, wretched creature, may be afraid to come near to him. He is unattended by his glorious retinue, who, we have seen, attended his birth. They withdraw as soon as he is incarnate, and continue at a necessary distance, through the

whole of his humble life; observing, with wonder and joy, the exertions of his love and kindness to the afflicted and needy. Although he was seen of angels; yet, they were not allowed to appear and act as his servants; they, it is true, might observe every step he took, and every beneficent action he performed; and might rejoice therein; and celebrate his praises, as they were wont before he became man. But it did not accord with the nature of things, and the state he then assumed, to permit the heavenly choirs to sing his praises on earth, in the manner they did in heaven.

On the whole: we have seen sufficient to convince us, that things are in disorder and confusion, and must remain so without divine interposition. This we see clearly is the fruit of sin; and in the present state of things, it is impossible man can escape the miseries he labours under, and the more awful dangers which await him. This part of the subject, therefore, brings forward the necessity we treat of: and whilst we see mankind lost and miserable, and cannot be saved, and made happy any other way, the greater the loss and misery, the greater the necessity for the incarnation appears.

DISCOURSE IV.

The eternal Perfections of Deity glorified by the Incarnation.

If any other way of salvation could have been devised, for the ruined race of men, consistent with the honour and glory of the divine perfections, it is reasonable to suppose that way would have been taken; and, consequently, the Creator would not have assumed the nature, and the character of his creature. It is impossible for any creature to comprehend the ways and means, which are within the exertions of infinite wisdom.

It becomes us to think soberly, and speak with the greatest humility on the subject. We can only reason from effects, which we see clearly stated before us, in matters of fact; and retrace these, as far as we can, to the cause which produced them; and, conclude, upon the whole, that any other means would not be suitable to the end proposed, and therefore could not bear an application to it.

If the infinite LOVE of the eternal Jehovah fixes on an object, suitable (we do not say worthy of it) and capable of enjoying the glorious emanations, and blessed fruits which constantly flow from it; is it not much to the honour and glory of this per-

fection of God, that it should be manifested, and applied in the most excellent and honourable manner? Accordingly, we read the Father's love to the souls of men, in the incarnation of his only begotten Son. "For God *so* loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," 1 John iii. 16. And "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John iv. 10.

If, then, poor, feeble, helpless man, be the object of divine mercy, and must be saved; it is certain, that no power can redeem and save him inferior to to that which created and formed him. His Saviour must not only have in himself all divine perfections, but also, a power of glorifying them in all the stages of his assumed humanity, as they subsist in the unity of the divine nature.

The plan on which he saves sinners, is such, as shall embrace every particular object, person, and thing concerned. God and man—the divine and human natures—law and grace—sin and sacrifice—guilt and suffering—offence and satisfaction—injury and atonement—difference and reconciliation—death and life—and a thousand other contrasts are intimately connected with those means, by which the Redeemer saves the souls of men. We may safely assert, that no mere creature is adequate to the arduous task of recon-

ciling these extreme opposites; or of harmonizing objects so infinitely different. Nevertheless, the glory of all the divine perfections, and the felicity of the creatures, now so miserable, makes this work indispensably necessary.

The glory of the divine nature, and the honour of the perfections which are necessarily and immutably in God; the rights of his moral government over mankind; the abolition of sin and death, which now reign so powerfully; and the security of life and immortal happiness, are the subjects of chief consideration to the rational thinking mind. The extent and importance of them, rise infinitely above created comprehension; but though they be immeasurable, and so much beyond finite capacities; yet we know their existence: they clearly illustrate the necessity of which we treat, but totally exclude interference of mere creatures. It is the manifest duty of all creatures, to glorify God in every perfection of his nature; but none of them has any power of transferring the virtue of their obedience to the guilty as being inadequate.

When restitution for offences committed against the divine will is required, by offended justice; and the total overthrow of evil is demanded, by the infinite purity and holiness, which are essential to the divine nature; can any creature be supposed to stand up, and say, I will give restitution? I will answer the demand? No, the nature of the case for ever prohibits any such presumption. For

no creature can do more than he is bound to do for himself; neither angel, nor archangel, nor all the angels of heaven, can take on them the human nature, for the purposes of glorifying God in the salvation of lost sinners.

But the ways and means exhibited by him who is by nature God, and is, therefore, named the wisdom and the power of God, removes every difficulty. Creatures must all give way, and stand by, with profound, prostrate attention, when the only wise God exhibits the plan of redemption, by the means of himself, assuming the integral human nature.

We may take a little further notice of the divine person of our Redeemer, so often called the Son of God in the holy Scriptures. When we contemplate the Son, we cannot help noticing the Father, and the Holy Ghost; for they are also divine persons, and are equally concerned in the momentous transactions connected with the nativity of the Son. We see the unity of God by the light of nature: but it is by the light of Revelation, we have any knowledge of the divine personality. Nor do we apprehend any absurdity in the received doctrine of the Trinity, which asserts ONE BEING, subsisting in THREE PERSONS; in a way and manner far above created capacities. We therefore never presume to explain it, but embrace it on the authority of these persons revealing their unity and personality.

"A person in the God-head," as one well expresses it, "Is a complete, intelligent, individual subsistence; which is neither a part of, nor sustained by any other; but is distinguished by an incommunicable property, in the same undivided essence: yet, so as each person is not of a distinct nature, or essence of his own; the same divine nature, or essence, is common to all the three glorious persons, it being the transcendant, and incommunicable property of the divine nature to reside in more persons than one." *Fisher's Catechism of the holy Trinity. Ques.* 9. 10.

The properties, and operations of each person, might occupy much of our time, as they appear in the work of redemption; but a consideration of these would carry us too far beyond our design. I shall, therefore, only observe; that it is proper to the first person, in order of subsistence, to be called the Father; to the second, to be called the Son; and to the third, to be called the Holy Ghost. Each of which are terms of relation, and not of difference, as if one were superior or inferior to another.

For our better satisfaction on a subject of such infinite importance, let us view some of those essential, divine characters, by which the Son of God is pointed out in the sacred Scriptures. This we deem highly proper in this part of our illustration, that we may see, more fully, that the eternal perfections of the divine nature, are glorified by the incarnation of the Son.

1. Jehovah is a divine character, applied only to the self-existent, independent, eternal Being. It is a name that cannot be explained, say the Jews: it contains all times; the past, the present, and the future. It is the most glorious name by which the Creator has revealed himself to creatures. It intimates the being who hath given being and existence to all others.

That Jesus Christ is Jehovah, appears from the following considerations, and from many Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament. The natural perfections of Jehovah, are ascribed to him without any restriction or limitation. The worship and honour due to the divine nature, are given to him, both by angels and saints. And he performed works, which none but the author of nature could perform, in his own name, and when he pleased. We see all these exemplified in his humble life on earth.

The Scriptures of the Old Testament point out Jehovah very clearly in the state we treat of. A few testimonies here will be sufficient, as we shall, hereafter, in the proof of the incarnation, have to go twice over this sacred ground: first, in the prophecies; and, secondly, in the sacrifices. Many ages before the incarnation, the holy prophet Isaiah saw Jehovah high and lifted up, sitting upon a throne, on which he exclaimed, I am undone, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. This King is Jehovah. "These things,

said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him;" that is, when he saw the glory of Jehovah, who is Christ, the son of man. "Trust ye in the Lord, (*i. e.* Jehovah) for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. "To whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed?" But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him. "One shall say, in Jehovah have I righteousness and strength. In Jehovah shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory. Now the righteousness of God is manifested. This is the name whereby he shall be called, Jehovah our righteousness. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who, of God, is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

Thus we have a sufficient discovery of the rock of ages; and see that Jesus Christ is Jehovah, equal with the Father and the Holy Ghost. It is observable also, that the essential character we now speak of, distinguished in the Old Testament by capitals, is the very same that is given to Jesus Christ throughout the New; and plainly signifies the authority and dominion of Jehovah incarnate. Christ is called Jehovah and Lord above a thousand times in the sacred writings.

2. We take notice of another divine character, universally applied to the supreme Being; that is GOD. By this the Redeemer of men is distin-

guished from every other being: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself; God manifest in the flesh." Christ is then the true God; the living God; the unchangeable God; the eternal God.

The characters, God and Saviour, particularly point out Jesus Christ; they are so often joined to this sacred name, that we cannot mistake seeing his divinity. Here we might bring forward all his moral excellencies, which are truly perfections in him. In creatures, when improved to the highest degree, they are but qualifications which may distinguish one from another; but in Jesus Christ, our God and Saviour, we contemplate the infinite moral perfections which exalt him above every name that is named in heaven or on earth. In his life and ministry, we see them gloriously manifested, in such a way and manner as bespeak the present God.

But that we may see the Son bears this divine character, and is really God equal with the Father, in all natural and moral perfections; let us attend to the following declarations, which establish this truth beyond all reasonable contradiction. He is called the Most High God: the Mighty God: the Merciful God: the God of Hosts: the God of Israel: the Lord God: God over all blessed for ever.

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory, to the only wise God our Sa-

viour, be glory, dominion, and power, both now and for ever, amen.

We might extend this to a great length, by bringing forward many passages where the divine characters of God and Saviour are joined together, to identify the person of Jesus Christ. Particularly the doxologies, with which all the epistles, written by the holy apostles, so fully abound. But these being in the hands of every Christian, we need not enlarge: we therefore bring forward another character, more nearly related to our subject, which is,

3, EMMANUEL. In this we see the divine and human natures united. It belongs to no other person but Jesus Christ, being a character to which he claims the exclusive right. It is one of those names in which his divinity is evidently expressed, as every one may see who can read the interpretation of it by the angel before he was born.

It is an Hebrew word, signifying God with us: intimating, that the self-existing eternal Being has condescended to enter into a relation with us of the human race, distinct from every other with which we are acquainted. Hence the meaning of the character has a most immediate respect to the incarnation. If he be the Mighty God, as the prophet declares, and as we have before observed, it is a certain argument of his divine unoriginated nature. But here we see him *El*, the strong, the

powerful God, to whom nothing is impossible; because he is strength and power in the abstract. He is really with us, not only as he is with all other creatures, in the constant exercise of his providence, government, care, and good will for us; but in a more blessed and happy sense. He is *Emmanu*, with us, as one of us in our nature and likeness. A husband, a brother, a friend: who, because we were, even from eternity, the objects of his delight: he humbled himself, and became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich. "By the light of nature," says the pious Mr. Henry, "we see God above us; by the light of the law, we see God against us; but by the light of the Gospel, we see God with us."

This is a character that gives us clear light into the important subject of our illustration.

Here we see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ: the whole divine nature appears in his divine person: hence his own declarations—he that hath seen me hath seen the Father: ye believe in God, believe also in me: believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; but

4, We shall introduce one character more, which exhibits the sacred adorable person we speak of, in real and true humanity. He is called the ONLY BEGOTTEN of the Father. This appellation is a certain evidence of the Son's incarnation. It is a character no where to be found in the books of Moses and the prophets. We have the name of

Son, in the sacred writings of David, Solomon, and Isaiah; but no where, that I know of, is the character only begotten to be met with in the Old Testament. It is a name, however, by which the Redeemer is pointed out as soon as his advent is ascertained; and intimates, that he is the ONLY PERSON able to glorify the divine perfections in the recovery of lost and miserable creatures; and therefore is ALONE worthy to be appointed, called, and sent of the Father, to restore ruined mankind.

Jesus Christ is denominated the Son of God above forty times in the Scriptures, and above twenty times is called his Son; which we may consider as sufficient evidence of Christ's divinity and equality with the Father. The character only Begotten, is one among two hundred, by which the Son incarnate is known; and it shows us not only that he alone is able, and only worthy, to be the Redeemer of men, and therefore, in contradistinction to every other, is appointed and consecrated to the work: but it also clearly distinguishes the divine person of the Son from all creatures who are called the sons of God, because he is their Creator, and as such calls himself their Father; in this sense the only Begotten, of whom we speak, is also a Father, for by him were all things created.

It intimates also, that he is a Son in a higher sense than by adoption; which is a privilege peculiar to all who receive him, and, by true faith, rely on him for salvation: all Christians are sons of

God in this view. But he being God by nature, as a Son is obedient to the Father's call, order, and appointment. It shows too the superexcellency of his birth as man, being brought forth in a way suited to the dignity of his divine nature, being the only man that ever was so distinguished, or can ever enjoy such honour. In this view he is truly the only Begotten: being conceived without sin, by the power of the Spirit of God, and born without natural or moral imperfection. He was the only one that ever came into the world perfect, and in all respects according to the divine will.

This character may also satisfy us, that the incarnate Son is the only person who possesses in himself the divine and human natures. He enjoys both in the most perfect degree and happiest manner. He only is worthy of the glory he sustained, as the one mediator between God and man, and as the Saviour of his body, and the head of the church.

There are four places in which the word Begotten is used; the first shows us his appointment and designation to the mediatorial office—I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee. This is a proclamation that the Son is constituted the king in Zion, because he is fit and worthy to reign, Psal. ii. 6, 7.

In the second, it is applied to the resurrection of Jesus, as it is also written in the second psalm:

"Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Which begetting is undeniably the resurrection of Jesus, whom God raised from the dead, Acts xiii. 30, 35.

In the third, it is applied to his exalted state: "Now sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high: for unto which of the angels, said he at any time, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. I have exalted thee this day to a state of honour and dignity, much better than the angels, Heb. i. 3, 4, 5.

In the fourth place, it is applied to his most honourable priesthood: "Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee." I have called and appointed thee to be an high priest, the most excellent of all offices; because thou art my Son, the only one who can effectually execute all my will, and communicate all my mercy to miserable mankind, Heb. v. 5.

On the whole we may conclude, that this character, applied to the word made flesh by the beloved disciple, belongs more to the incarnation than to the divinity of the Son of God. By it, he is declared to be the Son incarnate, and that he is the only person who could sustain the offices of mediator*.

The eternal and unchangeable perfections of God are dishonoured by sin; which is not only an

* See Pool's Anno. on Psal. ii. 7.—Lambert's Ser. vol ii. p. 83, 85.

unworthy departing from him, but also a direct opposition to his nature and being. It is therefore necessary that such an evil should be restrained and destroyed, and that the divine Majesty should be magnified on the ruins of it. Not that the divine nature can be in any danger, or any of the eternal perfections subsisting in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be injured by the defection of any, or indeed of all creatures from allegiance and duty; but it is highly proper, that the glory and honour of God should be maintained against all who would attempt to insult his name, or any perfection of his nature.

In the incarnation of him, whom we have seen, is, by nature, God, provision is made for the honour and glory of every divine perfection. The Father is glorified in the humiliation and obedience of the Son, who, throughout the whole of his life, had the glory of the Father at heart, and the honour of the divine perfections in view. We have no instance wherein Jesus Christ sought his own glory as man, but many evidences assure us that he declined every thing of the kind: he was literally poor, and had not where to lay his head: he was humble, and would not accept of a crown when offered him: he was meek, and did not revile when reviled.

Nothing that could arise from the empty applause of creatures had any effect on the divine mind of Jesus Christ; he was wholly devoted to the glory

of him that sent him, and to the obtaining of that glory which he acquired as the Saviour of man. The general reasons which we have stated to illustrate, and clearly establish the necessity of the incarnation, admit of many particulars; some of which we shall mention, and conclude this discourse.

Observe, with attention and grateful affection, the motive which gave occasion to so humble an act. THE LOVE OF GOD for miserable man, seems to be the chief object on which the Son of God kept his eye, through the whole of his nativity. Love is essential to God, and therefore the apostle assures us God is love: he is love in the essence and nature of it: he therefore has supreme delight in himself, and in all his works.

That this most excellent perfection is in the blessed Jesus equally with the Father, abundance of Scriptures declare. We may state the subject in this manner:—the love of the Father is the moving cause:—the love of the Son is the procuring cause:—the love of the Spirit is the effectual cause; producing every effect, which the infinite unmerited love of God intends.

To glorify this source of felicity, the incarnate Son exerts all his divine perfections. His infinite compassion, pity, mercy, wisdom, prudence, power, goodness, fortitude, patience, and long-suffering, and every divine excellency, were all exercised in time, place, and order, as occasions

required. All were manifested, and gloriously magnified, in the life and ministry of the holy and blessed Jesus. Hence the frequent appeals he made to his Father, from the unjust censures of men; and the Father's public acknowledgements of him, in approbation of his person and actions. His transfiguration sheds the brightest lustre on this sentiment, together with his own words in his last prayer: he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father the hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.—I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work thou gavest me to do. And in the same hour, when Judas the traitor, was gone out to finish his treason, Jesus said unto the eleven, "Now is the the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him."

DISCOURSE V.

The divine Government makes the Incarnation necessary.

When we look into the nature of things, as they subsist in this present evil world, we see all in disorder and confusion. It cannot be supposed that the infinitely wise Creator ever intended such

awful mischiefs should be established among his creatures, as are seen daily afflicting and tormenting them. The existence and operations of moral evil, which produce all the penal evils which distress mankind, require the interposition of a divine Person to counteract and destroy them. It is not in the power of mere creatures to overthrow the dominion and reign of sin.

The acknowledged usefulness of the most eminent men in laying a restraint, and giving a check to the passions and immoralities of their own times, have never been effectual to bring things into that state of order and harmony which, we must believe, the righteous Governor requires. It therefore appears indispensably necessary, that some infallible effectual means should be used to obtain this. Does not reason seem to call aloud for the All-wise and Omnipotent to come forward, in a way that shall answer the end of restoring harmony and happiness to his creatures? If this cannot be obtained on any other terms than such as are of the most humiliating nature, it becomes highly needful, from the nature of the case, that the divine Person so necessary, should assume the nature, and accommodate himself to the state and circumstances of those disordered beings, over whom anarchy and woe so universally prevail: because the happy consequence of such condescending goodness, must be the restoration of order and tranquillity to those for whom he becomes in-

carnate. This is an effect which must follow the divine interference, and therefore not to be dispensed with, if mankind must be made happy.

It is necessary to our illustration that we take some notice of those laws, which the blessed Creator hath given to mankind, to be the rule of their conduct. Notwithstanding they are broken and trampled upon by sinners, and of consequence all the mischiefs we have alluded to follow; yet this is no reason why we may not look into them, both for the conviction of the guilty, and more perfect establishment of our subject.

We may state them under two heads: first, those in which the justice and righteousness of God are most evidently displayed. Secondly, such as most eminently manifest his loving kindness, mercy, and grace. These two heads embrace the two systems, which are distinguished by divines into the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace. Under the first may be placed the laws of nature, the moral law, and all its appendages. These, although they be violated, cannot be dissolved; they must remain in full force.

Notwithstanding the covenant engagements on our part, to keep and fulfil every precept, have been dissolved by an universal defection; yet the principles they contain, and the authority on which they stand, remain immutably and eternally the same.

Hence our blessed Lord, when he was made

under the law, assures us, that he came not to destroy the law, or the prophets, but to fulfil them: that is, to support the principles which were established by justice, righteousness, and true holiness, in the nature of things; and to maintain the authority with which they were sanctioned by the eternal Law-giver, when he formed them. He, therefore tells us, "That heaven and earth shall sooner pass away, than one jot or tittle of the law shall fail."

This, doubtless, is the moral law, published by the audible voice of the Lord God from mount Sinai, and heard by all the tribes of Israel. It is not only a rule of government to them, but to every rational soul to whom it naturally belongs; it is worthy of being supported, because it is a beautiful display of the divine character; it directs our love and reverence to him, who alone is the object of our worship. We might enter at great length into its nature and effects. The first showing what it is, as a system of truth and justice. The second what it does, both with regard to good and bad men. But we shall make no copious enlargement.

What the moral law is, in the nature of it, is fully established in the sacred Scriptures: we there learn that the law of the Lord is perfect; it is a complete rule of obedience to the soul; sure and immutable as the author of it. Right in every part, precept, and tittle; pure and holy, true and right-

teous altogether. The works of his hands are verity and judgment. All his commandments are sure, they stand fast for ever, and are done in truth and uprightness. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good. For we know that the law is spiritual, containing the will of the eternal Spirit, promulgated to the spirits of men.

In this, the Almighty Father exhibits all the affection and tenderness necessary to the growing happiness of his household. Herein, he communicates his mind to each, and it becomes a direction to the mind of man. Here is every expression of his good will, and every word is a manifestation of his love; it is founded in love; and therefore it demands the unremitted exercise of our affections to God in the first place, and in the highest degree, and then to every fellow-creature. Hence we are assured, love is the fulfilling of the law. It cannot justify any act of obedience in which love is not the moving cause. This is the motive from which every action towards God and man must flow. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind: this is the first and great commandment. The second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

I beg leave to offer a few thoughts more from a practical writer, on the apostle's character of the law, as stated in Rom. vii. "Some think," he says, "these high characters are given to the

law, as being holy in teaching us our duty towards God; just in prescribing our duty towards our neighbour, and good in regard of ourselves*." Others thus, the law is holy respecting the matter of it, because it prescribeth holy things; just in propounding rewards and punishments; and good in respect to the end leading to holiness and happiness. But I think we ought to carry the point much further; all these titles are given to the law, both in relation to the Author, the matter and end of the law. The Author of the law is holy, just, and good; so is the doctrine, or matter contained in the law; and so is the end proposed by the law†. The law gives us a display of the infinite perfections of its author, as such it includes in it all that is amiable and excellent. I see no reason why we may not take in each, and every one of the above particulars, for the law of God is exceeding broad, Psalm cxix. 96. It is ordained to illustrate all the divine excellencies; and therefore may well be called holy, and especially the precept of love is holy, just, and good‡."

Thus we see the nature of that divine law, which is the rule of order to mankind, and by which the righteous Judge of all governs his creatures. But how is his blessed will resisted! his law broken, and his authority despised and set at nought! It is infallibly certain, that by the weak imperfect

* Bengilius in Loco. † Parcus in Poli, Synop. crit.

‡ Dr. Stafford's Sin and Grace.

deeds of the law, no fallen son of Adam can be justified. Let us now consider, in a few words, what the Law does.

Our observations here, will confirm what has been said of the nature of it; and more fully illustrate the necessity we treat of. Here we see its enmity against sin; its power to afflict the conscience of the sinner; its authority in reproving and condemning the transgressor; its just and righteous indignation, in giving sanction to the punishments which the enemies of God must for ever suffer. As it affords no mercy to the guilty, it can admit of no repentance for past transgressions; but stands upon full satisfaction for every offence. It is founded in truth, and cannot therefore flatter or prevaricate: what it prohibits, it also condemns with the utmost severity.

Sin, in the nature of it, is enmity against the Law. The sinner, therefore, may wish there was no law by which he could be punished; but the authority of it must be maintained, whatever comes of the transgressor.

The authority and efficacy of it, arises from God himself, who is the Lawgiver, able to save and to destroy: it is an instrument of terror to the incorrigible: by it we know the terror of the Lord, and see the justice of the punishments inflicted for sin. Is it not righteous in God to take vengeance on his enemies? Is it not fit, in the nature of things, that he should pour out his fiery indignation, re-

vealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men?

Thus we see the authority, the nature, and effects of that Law, which is founded in the justice and righteousness of God. If this must be established, it shows the necessity of the incarnation of that divine Person which we have pointed out, because he only can magnify the Law, and make it honourable by his own obedience. No created nature is sufficient to satisfy its just demands for past offences, nor to honour all its precepts by future obedience. "For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us." This inefficiency of the Law, arises from the weakness that is in us. It is not able to justify the ungodly, till it receives satisfaction. And he who can satisfy it, must be made under the Law. "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

Secondly; There is another code of laws, which most eminently manifests the loving kindness, mercy, and grace of our Creator. This is distinguished from the former in many particulars. It opens and lays before us, all those subjects which are distinguished by the character of divine Revelation. As the subsistence of three persons in the unity of the Divine Essence:—the wonderful re-

storation of men and things, by the *united counsels* and operations of each, in a way that shall infallibly terminate in their eternal honour, and in the immutable salvation of all the redeemed. We have before observed, that the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is the fundamental and procuring cause of all felicity to mankind. Here we have a view of the scheme of redemption, and all its concomitants, in the whole work necessary to be performed to obtain the happy end. Here we see the rules by which the divine persons conduct themselves, in relation to those who are the objects of their mercy, and compassion. These are contained in the covenant of grace, which orders every part of the plan, and regulates all the circumstances of the incarnation. All things are particularly written in the volume of this book of the covenant.

The eternal purpose of God, respecting the redemption and salvation of miserable sinners, is called a covenant; because it manifests the distinct personality of the sacred Three. A covenant necessarily implies more persons than one. As it respects the unity of God, he calls it his decree, counsel, or purpose. Here we have the model of the new creation; the œconomies of grace are built upon it; the dispensations of the church have through all ages been formed according to it; it contains those rules of government necessary for the well-being of every member of it; here is the Christian's charter of privileges; the title

deeds to the eternal inheritance are engrossed in this covenant.

We may be a little more particular, and enumerate a few of the heads of this most gracious covenant; that we may, more clearly, see those principles which give being to the laws of love and mercy, and make the subject of our illustration indispensably necessary. If the principles of truth and justice, which we have seen in the moral law, have any force to establish the necessity we speak of; most certainly, the divine compassions of the eternal mind, which is all love and mercy, must have greater force to support it. In the system of grace before us, we see the most glorious displays of all the endearing perfections of the Almighty, in providing ways and means to make the most undeserving wretched creatures happy. Hence the plan laid down must be followed up, if God be true and faithful.

The leading particulars to be noticed in what we have called the laws of mercy and grace, refer, principally, to what may be called the stipulation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; which embrace the whole scheme of redemption, and every part of the plan of salvation. Here we learn first, that the Son of God stipulates, or engages, that he shall clothe himself with humanity, and become really man: that he shall in his incarnate state, bear the sins, miseries, and utmost punishments due for sin: that he shall subdue every

enemy of God, and remove every impediment to man's happiness: that he shall restore, and render him obedient to all the divine will: that he shall make him happy: that he shall restore the divine honours in the person of man, and become an eternal security for them. It is only a divine person can fulfil such stipulations; and we have before proved that Jesus Christ is that person.

But when he hath completed all that is incumbent on him, in respect of the restitution for the offences he answers for, and giving the satisfaction the Father demands; the Father assures him that he is fully satisfied: that he shall be the supreme head over all things: that he shall be the glorified sovereign of innumerable subjects, who shall serve him and be his peculiar people to all eternity: that he shall receive the highest glory for his deep humiliation: that his gracious designs in favour of mankind shall not fail of success, through every period of time: and that those whom he shall redeem, shall be exalted to glory and honour with him; shall have the nearest access to the divine Majesty, and shall never be in danger of losing that dignity.

The Holy Ghost, who is the third party in these most gracious transactions of God, guarantees, or stipulates, for the full execution of the whole: he becomes, if we may be allowed so to express it, a surety between the other two, engaging with each and for each: he undertakes every part of this necessary work incumbent on him; that he shall

bear special witness in all the holy prophets to the person, the incarnation, and glory of his only begotten: that he shall, in the fulness of time, be the sole author of that distinguished man, in whom the personal deity of the uncreated Son shall dwell. That he shall never be without his divine presence and consolations, when they are on particular occasions necessary: that he shall undertake that difficult part of the work, which respects the renovation and sanctification of the souls of men: to apply the remedies so fully provided by the life and death of his Son, and make them effectual to salvation: to direct the plan of divine providence in subserviency to the higher plan of redemption: to *succeed* the instruments of man's recovery, under the authority of the incarnate Son: and, finally, exhibit the whole scheme of grace in the full completion of it at the end of time, to the eternal glory and honour of God, the happiness of the redeemed and the total confusion of reprobates. Behold! what manner of love shines in every part of these stipulations. Creatures cannot be parties here. It is honour sufficient, if the highest and most blessed orders are permitted to witness, whilst the lowest, and most miserable enjoy the benefits of them. But, "He makes known unto the principalities and powers, his *manifold wisdom*; according to the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Here we see the immutable counsel, sure purpose, unchangeable

resolution, and good pleasure, wherein God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence.

If these laws and stipulations which are here pointed out must be supported (and the necessity of supporting them is obvious), it must be by some special interference of him, who hath given them being and virtue.

The laws of nature must not be inverted, or accommodated, to the capricious dispositions of sinful creatures. But the incarnation is a security for the honour and dignity of every part and precept; and hence, the establishment of them illustrates the necessity of it.

The moral law, which we have more particularly noticed, and the ceremonial law, which we have named only as an appendage to this, clearly points out the subject we treat of. This is a particular part of the ground, on which we build the necessity of the Son of God becoming the son of man; that he may fulfil all things required in the one, and represented or typified in the other. Without the incarnation, neither the principles of truth and justice in the laws of nature, nor the precepts of morality in the laws of Moses, can be supported among mankind, in their fulness and extent as they ought to be: but as our next discourse is to open this more fully, we shall not enlarge here.

The regulations of the mercy and love of God, as exhibited in the whole code of Revelation, con-

stantly have the nativity of a divine person in view; it seems the great subject of illustration: the Saviour and surety of men must himself become man: he cannot fully represent the person, nor sustain the character of man but in true humanity. It is by this he puts himself into the transgressor's place, and makes himself liable to all his distresses; to bear his miseries; and to suffer the utmost of his punishment. The Son of God cannot suffer till he becomes the son of man; because his divine nature is as incapable of pain, as his human nature is of deity. But the union of the two natures in his one person, constitutes a Saviour and a sufferer: a person qualified to endure the utmost extent of misery, without the danger of being consumed or destroyed by it.

It is highly proper that some plan should be adopted to this very important subject; that the real person of the Saviour may be clearly ascertained when he comes to assume the human nature: a plan to which divine providence should pay a special regard. This we see exhibited at length in the history of the Jews, where a particular providence is exercised over that people; and observe a full and regular genealogy from the Father of mankind, to Abraham the father of this *people*; and from him to the very person of Jesus Christ. Nothing is more certain than that the dispensation under which they were placed, for so many generations, was planned by divine Wisdom; and it

evidently appears, that it was established with the express purpose of ascertaining, and pointing out the incarnate God, when he should be found in the fashion of man, and in the form of a servant.

Moses speaks very plainly of a greater prophet than himself, who should come at a future period; which certainly intimates the incarnation of him, who only could redeem and save mankind. His institutions therefore were needful for the time being; to direct the children of the prophets to Bethlehem; to meet the Son given; the Child born; the Wonderful; Counsellor; the Mighty God; the Everlasting Father; the Lord of Life; and the Prince of Peace; in whom all their prophecies, sacrifices, and types should have an exact accomplishment.

It is said by some, and I think with much probability of truth, that this divine person often appeared in the dress of humanity to the most ancient patriarchs, and walked with them, and they with him in familiar friendship, conversing, without doubt, freely and affectionately on the subject of our illustration; opening to them the full necessity, and confirming their faith in the certainty of his future incarnation. The angels appearing to Abraham seems to favour this opinion. Abraham saw my day and was glad, John viii. 56.

But it is more generally thought, that it was he who appeared to Moses, and commissioned him to bring Israel out of Egypt; who proclaimed the law

with human voice from Sinai; and was in truth and reality the Lord God of Israel. As a divine person, he certainly was, but not to the exclusion of the Father, and the Holy Ghost, for the three persons are ONE GOD.

We may observe, in the last place—That all the operations of providence, through all nature; especially such as have a respect to this world in general, as well as the church of Israel in particular, have an eye to, and are directed toward this most momentous and wonderful of all events. The personal manifestation of divinity in humanity, seems a central point round which all providential occurrences should turn. If it be in subserviency to this, they exist, which we may assert and believe without danger; then it is highly proper they should have a constant regard to the promotion of it; because it is a medium of the highest glory to God, and the greatest good to men.

The living creatures, who move the wheels of providence, keep their faces and direct their steps towards this advent of their Creator: they can do nothing against it, but every thing for it. All the orders these angelic agents receive, in relation to the affairs of the earth, in the empires, kingdoms, states, or persons of it, proceed from the will of him who shall be made flesh. Their commissions are sealed with a signature descriptive of his incarnation, and the motto expressive of the whole is EMMANUEL.

DISCOURSE VI.

How the divine Government is supported by the Incarnation.

When we look back on those divine institutions, which the Creator hath established for the regulation and happiness of his creatures, and see them abused and set at nought by all without exception, we must infer the necessity of their author appearing for their honour and dignity, in a way that shall establish their authority against all opposition. The invariable principles of truth and righteousness, which run through the laws of nature, morality, and religion; and the endearing manifestations of the love and mercy of God to miserable creatures, so fully held forth in all the stipulations of revelation, supported by divine Providence from the beginning of the world, place the necessity we speak of in the strongest light.

Without the advent of the Son of God, who only can magnify these institutions, and honour them with a dignity superior to that which they could receive from any other character, they must have been altogether nugatory, and without effect. It must be a reflexion on the honour of the eternal crown, if they are not supported when published. The incarnation, therefore, is necessary, as the grand means of supporting the dignity of the laws, and maintaining the honours of the Lawgiver.

To illustrate this branch of our subject, we shall state two questions, and attempt to answer them.

First, How do the laws of God make his incarnation necessary?

Secondly, How is the dignity of them maintained by it?

In answer to the first of these questions, we observe, first, That because these laws are divine, and in their nature worthy of God; Christ, also, being a divine person, and therefore superior in dignity and glory, to any laws under which creatures may be constituted; he, consequently, is only able to magnify and make them honourable. Hence, the necessity of his incarnation, to support the divine authority established in them.

Secondly. That because the laws of nature, and the precepts of morality are broken, they demand two things: *viz.* satisfaction for past offences, and perfect obedience for the future. It is most certain, that it is not in the power of creatures to answer any of these demands; but God our Saviour is able to do all this, to the least, or minutest article, and that by the means of his becoming man. Hence it becomes necessary.

Thirdly. Because if it be necessary that the laws should exist, in the full authority with which they are established; it is also necessary, that they should be honourably maintained, by the power and authority of him who hath instituted them. The necessity of laws for the government of creatures

is obvious. Hence the necessity of their honour and dignity is manifest, and consequently the coming of Christ to support them with honour. We cannot see it possible how he can magnify and honour them, but by his obedienee in the nature and character of man. Therefore, it is highly necessary that he should be incarnate, and become man; for this man ONLY is able to magnify the law and make it honourable.

Fourthly. Because there must be a congruity, a correspondence, or fitness between these laws, and the subjects who must obey them. The laws of angels, for instance, are not fit for the government of men; nor are the laws we speak of, appointed for the higher orders of heaven. Creatures higher or inferior to man, cannot be supposed to comprehend the nature and obligations of those laws, to which human nature is subject. But the Son of God cannot be liable to such inconvenience; because he has an intuitive knowledge of the strict and righteous obligations of all, and is able to accommodate himself to those which require his attention. If he therefore must be the Saviour of men, it is indispensably necessary that he should be man; that by the harmony of the human nature in him, which must be holy and without blame, answering to the divine nature of these righteous laws, they may have glory and honour in his personal divine obedience, which alone has virtue and efficacy sufficient to satisfy.

These are the reasons, by which the necessity we attempt to illustrate is supported.

But there are higher reasons which establish the subject, arising from the stipulations, or personal engagements of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which we have before explained in the last discourse. Upon a review of these, we see the necessity of the incarnation with the fullest evidence. Because without it, Revelation has no meaning or signification. This truth is the principal subject in the whole book; it is stated in the beginning, carried through every section, and rises with brighter lustre, till we see it effected and fully accomplished in the manner foretold. Shall the Father promise the seed of the woman, and that seed never be born? Shall the Holy Ghost instruct all the holy prophets to preach this doctrine, and the glory that should follow, and this event never come to pass? Shall the seed of Abraham, the Son of David, be so minutely described and never appear? No: "God is not a man that he should lie; nor the son of man that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it; hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Hence the truth of Revelation, and the veracity of the author of it, make the incarnation necessary.

A second reason arising from hence is—because without the eternal divinity, in the person of the Son, taking upon him the proper human nature; he cannot fulfil what he hath stipulated to perform,

or accomplish what he hath engaged to do. Till he becomes man, he can neither humble himself, nor be a sufferer; he can neither become obedient to the law, nor receive the reward promised to his obedience; he can neither redeem sinners, nor release them from their bondage; he cannot destroy sin and death till he become man:—man, therefore, he must be, if these ends are to be obtained. "Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation (or emptied himself), and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he, also, himself likewise took part of the same; that through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil?" Here see the great mystery of godliness! God manifest in the flesh; accomplishing on earth, in the fulness of time, the stipulations, or engagements, he had entered into with the Father from eternity!

A third reason to establish the necessity before us, arises from the agency and operations of the blessed Spirit of truth. What he has stipulated to perform in the great economy of salvation, makes the nativity of the Son indispensably necessary: this is the grand foundation on which he builds all his works. He can do nothing in relation to the conversion or sanctification of souls, but with respect and special regard to this. The incarnation,

therefore, must take place, not only to make good all the testimonies he hath borne of it from the beginning of time, but, also, to open the way for all his gracious and merciful operations to the end of it. He begins to build the spiritual temple, when the blessed Jesus hath accomplished the work for which he was born; he bears special witness to his divine person in every step of his humiliation, and makes application of his finished work to the persons of men. The divine Prophet must therefore come, that the divine Spirit may fulfil all his purposes of grace towards the heirs of glory.

Once more; not a person of the human race ever could have been redeemed or saved, had not the eternal God, in the person of the Son, humbled himself to become the son of man. The human nature was fallen into the deep and dark pit of sin and guilt: but the Saviour, in his incarnation, descends into that horrible state, and carries the light of truth and grace in his merciful hand, sustained by the arm of his power. It is by this light the true state and condition of mankind is seen. For though it be dreadful, it is not desperate; because a strong deliverer makes his appearance. We see his divine person, and uncreated glories: we see the ardent love of his heart in the cheering smiles of his countenance; darkness and sorrow are dissipated, when the light of the world, the Lord of life, descends into humanity. It is, indeed, a faithful and true saying, full of unspeakable joy.

and worthy to be preached, or proclaimed, without intermission through all immensity of being and creation, to the honour and glory of his eternal name, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Underneath are the arms of the eternal God, to raise thee, poor, miserable, repenting soul out of the dreadful pit and miry clay. See the wonderful humiliation! The incarnate divinity stoops to the utmost human miseries! But of necessity this must be, or man is eternally lost. Being condemned, the sentence must be executed, if the Son of God does not come to reverse it. He does not come merely to inspect, or survey, the ruined state of miserable humanity, but to repair and make up the loss it had sustained. He does not act the part of the priest and Levite, who looked upon the wounded perishing object, without affording any relief; but the part of the good Samaritan, who did all that was necessary to heal and restore. The Almighty Redeemer humbled himself to take the fallen ruined creature into his own protection and care. He stoops to lift the helpless out of the most wretched condition: he raises up the feeble creature, interests him in the benefits of his incarnation, and all the blessed fruits of it; brings him to the house of the living God, and puts him under the care of those who are appointed to watch over him, to apply the remedies of divine infallible virtue, and to nourish him with the wine of the heavenly Canaan. Thus the

parable of the good Samaritan well illustrates our subject. For as the man robbed of his property, and wounded by those who robbed him, must have perished, had not this good friend appeared; so every person of the descendants of Adam must have been eternally lost, if the glorious blessed person we speak of had not been made in the likeness of sinful flesh.

Thus we see the reasons founded in the nature of things, and made so manifest by the revelation of the eternal purposes of God, make the incarnation necessary: all must have been to no purpose without it. If mankind had been maintained and supported in existence by the power which gave them being, without any regard to this happy event: these laws would have been of no use: we see every order and class of men dishonouring them: the laws of nature, which are best known, are frequently most profanely abused; the moral laws seem to have very little authority over the lives and conversations of multitudes: and divine Revelation, with all its sacred institutions, ever has been opposed. All this clearly shows the depravity of human nature; and that there was the greatest necessity that some means should be adopted to preserve the existence as well as the authority of these divine regulations.

If we take a little more notice of the moral law, which is built on the laws of nature, and supports the institutions of grace in every part: we observe,

that where mercy rules, the authority and influence of it must be supported by this law: he, therefore, who can open and communicate to the wretched all the treasures of infinite grace, and magnify mercy in such communications; it is highly fit that he should satisfy the law, by which the blessings necessary may become due; both that mercy may have a proper title to give, and the poor needy creature a just and legal right to receive. Here it appears highly proper that this law, in every part and article of it, should be magnified in its nature, extent, design, usefulness, and end.

We might enlarge to great length on these and many other particulars, connected with this system of divine morals, contained in the ten commandments, and their appendages. But what has been advanced is sufficient to establish and illustrate the necessity we treat of, and to answer the first question stated. We come to the next question, which is,

Secondly, How is the dignity of the divine laws maintained by the incarnation? A full answer here might require us to anticipate the leading particulars of our Redeemer's life: but as this is not the proper place, we, for the present, decline it, and briefly answer by some observations arising from the nature of the subject, as his voluntary submission; his universal obedience; and the happy consequences of both.

We take notice, in the first place, of his volun-

tary submission. We cannot help seeing that the honour of the divine law is maintained by the submission of a divine Person. He is the author of it, but, notwithstanding, becomes subject to it. This subjection evidently implies his assuming the nature of those creatures for whom it was formed, and becoming one of them that he may be under the law. This submission, we must believe, is his own voluntary act, arising from his most tender pity toward suffering humanity. Images are too faint, and language fails in strength, to describe the burning zeal of his infinite love for his Father's glory, and the salvation of souls; neither of which can be restored, if the law remains broken and without satisfaction. It must either be honourably supported, or totally cancelled; because it must be without effect, if it be without authority: an inefficient law is of no use.

But the rights and honours of the divine government must also be maintained. The Lord is jealous for his holy name; and he hath sanctioned his government with this declaration: "My glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." But when the Son comes forward, who is the Father's equal, freely and willingly, in obedience to his call or invitation: he restores the honours and dignity of the most just and righteous lawgiver, which he took not away. His divine, perfectly complete obedience magnifies the law, and makes it honourable. When sacri-

fice and offering were not desirable, because of their insufficiency either to magnify God, or save sinners: when the blood of bulls, and of goats, could not purge the conscience from dead works, nor restore the soul to the favour, service, and enjoyment of the living God: then, said the ardent and willing Saviour, "Lo I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart. A body hast thou prepared me," which, like the ark of cedar wood, shall contain all thy law, not only in the letter, but in the matter and spirit of it. This law shall be proclaimed in righteousness and faithfulness, that great multitudes of thy disobedient rebellious subjects may enjoy thy truth, loving kindness, and salvation." These are the words of the condescending Son, when he takes humanity upon him; he comes forward, not only with the professions of good will and readiness to undertake so needful a work, but he effectually proves the truth and sincerity of them, by the fulness of his submission to all the Father's pleasure. It is his meat and drink to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work; and he often declared, in the presence of great congregations, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me."

When he comes in such a voluntary manner, and submits to every expression of the Father's

will, and condescends to be obedient to the law, in the spirit, meaning, and letter of it, in the person and behalf of mankind; his submission and obedience must be universal, reaching to the most extensive sense in which it can be expounded and illustrated. Accordingly, although he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, HE MADE HIMSELF OF NO REPUTATION: he was more humbled than any man; emphatically a man of sorrows, and constantly acquainted with grief. But he was, notwithstanding, perfectly righteous in all things, as we may learn from the Father's testimony, saying of him, "THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED."

This leads us to remark, secondly, his universal obedience. Submission, however, free and voluntary, is a different subject from complete and perfect obedience. The first may be where the last is not; but here they are united in a glorious attractive manner. The Son of God submits that he may become obedient; he humbles himself to the law of works, which requires much to be done in the most complete and excellent way. And none but he was capable of such obedience as the law could justify.

He came into the world to perform the works which the law required: works of a spiritual and moral nature, which had respect to the soul, and its eternal felicity. He undertakes to keep the covenant which Adam had broken, and fulfils it

in the most exact and perfect manner. He was obedient in every respect, and neither yielded to temptation, nor eat forbidden fruit. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man, who can restore the ruins of the first, is the Lord from heaven.

The law required satisfaction for an innumerable race of guilty miserable creatures; the amount of the demand is the utmost perfection of nature; that from hence may arise those performances which may be justified on the strictest scrutiny. Every imagination, inclination, wish, or desire, must be all correspondent to the perfection of the law. But such perfection never has been found, nor ever can, in the nature of things be looked for in any of Adam's posterity. How then shall one individual release innumerable multitudes from the just vengeance with which they are threatened, and procure for them the blessings which shall make them happy? We answer; these are the fruits of his complete and most perfect obedience, who is both God and man in one person. Here we find a strong argument which establishes the necessity we have before us; because this work is as impossible to be performed by a mere creature, as it is impossible to fulfil the law without human obedience.

When we contemplate the dignity of this divine person, who is equal with, and the express image

of the Father; we may be assured, that every system of laws, to which he condescends to submit, must be honoured and infinitely magnified by his obedience. For we cannot suppose it partial, which would intimate imperfection, but must be universal and complete.

To confirm this, we may be allowed another supposition:—first, suppose that all the race we now speak of, to which we may add all mere creatures, united in one act of obedience to the law, and this to be performed with the greatest exactness according to it: then suppose that the Son of God performs it in the human nature, which in him must be perfect, and that there is no difference in the obedience of both: that is, that both are according to the spirit and letter of the law, and that it is fulfilled in both cases: yet it is certain the infinite dignity of the Creator gives a dignity to his obedience, to which all the obedience of all creatures could not aspire. Hence, on a view of the present fallen state of mankind, it does not appear, that the law could receive dignity and honour any other way than by his obedience. And thus we see both the necessity of the incarnation, and how the dignity of the law is maintained by it.

Our third observation, in answer to the question stated, is on the happy consequences of the voluntary submission, and universal obedience of our blessed Redeemer. The union of the divine and human natures in the one person of Jesus Christ,

called the hypostatical union, did not break or dissolve the obligations he was under, to keep the laws for himself as man, equally with any other man that ever did, or could exist. Hence obedience was his duty: but he had no sin or imperfection to stain his obedience; he performed the whole duty of man, which no man beside ever did; it was honourable to the law, and acceptable to God.

But it was the divinity which dwelt in him that gave efficacy, virtue, and merit to all his actions, and to every part of his obedience. From hence flow all the excellency, worth, and glory which are ascribed to the man Christ Jesus; for in him dwells all the fulness of the godhead bodily. This supports the authority and usefulness of the law, and glorifies it exceedingly and eternally; the threatening curses of it are altogether cancelled. There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. It is established to be a rule of life to saints through this world, and a rule of judgment to sinners in the next.

By virtue of the obedience of the Son of God, the law shall be magnified in the personal obedience of all believers:—it shall be the subject of their meditation day and night:—they shall see and admire the justice, order, harmony, and beauty of its precepts:—they shall enjoy, and live upon, the fulness and sweetness of its doctrines:—and shall confess and say, "The law of thy mouth

is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."

Thus the honours of the divine law are securely established to all eternity. They shall not be dishonoured any more for ever. The humbled suffering Son of God hath honoured them with immortal dignity. He hath perfected this by the sacrifice of himself. And the magnified law shall ever flourish to the honour of his incarnation.

DISCOURSE VII.

The Incarnation necessary to the Destruction of Sin.

If it be the design of the Son of God to remove the miseries of human nature, he must also remove the cause of them. The cause will naturally produce its effect; whilst the first remains, the last cannot cease. There may be restraints laid upon the latter, which may prevent many fatal consequences; but such prevention is only limited and precarious. There is no certainty of making a perfect cure in any case of affliction, till the cause of the disease be removed; but when this is done, the effect will cease of itself. Human miseries, flowing from sin, cannot cease till that be destroyed.

He who can take away sin, and remove the

cause of sorrow and pain from the mind and body, is evidently qualified to be the author of happiness to man. He is able to place him in a situation infinitely distant from what he was before, and to secure his happy state against all attempts to injure it: the Saviour of sinners came to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and to obtain eternal redemption for us; he then certainly is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.

We have before pointed out in what sense mankind are sinners; *viz.* by imputation, inclination, and rebellion. Here we enter more fully into the subject of sin, that we may find the springs of our misery, and those causes which give being to all our troubles: that from the result we may acquire strength to our illustration, and force to the argument, we now attempt to establish.

If sin be a transgression of the law of God, the evil of it consists in a want of conformity to the divine will. Nothing can be a greater evil than a want of conformity to that will, which, of necessity, must be the absolute rule to all moral agents. But this is the want we complain of, and it is the most grievous of all wants to rational creatures; because they stand opposed to that self-existent blessed Being, who hath given them their existence. Sin is an opposition to the divine nature and moral government of the Creator. It lives in the sinner, and pushes him on to every overt act

contrary to the will of God. It would make the creature an instrument, if possible, of destroying the Creator: it is positive enmity against God, the source of *moral and penal evil.*

The essence of moral evil is disobedience to the express institutions of heaven; it is an acting contrary to the divine will clearly made known, requiring our submission and humble obedience. But the will of a fallen creature, perverted, overpowered, and led away by sin, cannot, in that state, be under the influence of supreme authority, however fully set forth, and demanded by the moral law. What else but disobedience can arise from a will not subject to the will of God? But this want of submission is the sin of which we speak; it is that evil which evidently appears in all mankind, and often swells the vain mind into an imaginary dignity, very incompatible with the state of a feeble, much more of a fallen, creature.

"Every unregenerated spirit," says Dr. Guise on Rom. viii. 7, "is at enmity with God: the whole bent and disposition of the carnal heart, which is set upon earthly things as its chief and chosen good, stands in direct opposition to the blessed and holy God; to his perfections, authority, and government; to the revelation he has made of his mind and will; and to a conformity and spiritual enjoyment of him: it is not only disinclined and averse to him, but is downright

enmity itself against him under every consideration of him, that does not comport with, but lay a restraint upon its pride, or passions, or its depraved tempers, interests, pleasures, and designs, in any instance whatsoever: for such is its desperate malignity, and unyielding contrariety, to the good and holy law of God, that it will, by no means, be brought into a subjection to his authority therein, or into a compliance with its righteous and spiritual demands: nor indeed has it any principles or dispositions of its own, that can be turned that way."

"The internal malignity of sin," says another, "abstracted from all its dreadful effects, renders it most worthy of our hatred; for it is in its own nature direct enmity against God, and obscures the glory of all his attributes: it is the violation of his Majesty, who is the universal Sovereign of heaven and earth; a contrariety to his holiness, which shines forth in the law; a despising of his goodness, the attractive to obedience; the contempt of his omniscience, which sees every sin when it is committed; the slighting of his terrible justice, as if the sinner could secure himself from his indignation; a denial of his truth, as if the threatenings were a vain terror to scare men from sin."

Immoralities, or moral evil of every kind and degree, arise from hence; all the evils of human life are to be traced up to the evil heart of unbe-

lief, which spontaneously departs from the living God. From the depraved heart proceed evil thoughts: hence "The evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth evil things:" the imagination of the heart of man is only evil continually: it is evil from his youth: the heart is desperately wicked above all things; and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh: the wicked man multiplieth his words against God. Hear the complaint of the holy and righteous Creator against his fallen and wretched creatures: "With your mouth ye have boasted against me, and multiplied your words against me; I have heard them. Ye have wearied the Lord with your words: your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord," Mal. ii. 17, and iii. 13.

The horrid blasphemies, which proceed out of the mouth of depraved man, are too strong evidences of the enmity of his heart against God.

Who, but a creature in league with hell, could indulge the unnatural, diabolical thought of blaspheming the sacred and blessed name of the Parent of all good! What a world of iniquity is in the human heart! It is governed by infernal principles, learned from the old serpent, the devil. under the influence of vile appetites, and beastly gratifications:—it is the fruitful source of all impurity. Hence the almost endless list of immoralities with which the sacred Scriptures are crowded, under the appellations of the works of

the flesh, and the works of darkness, see Rom. i. 28—32. and iii. 9—19. Gal. v. 19—22. *cum multis aliis.*

Penal evil is the just punishment of moral evil; and of this God acknowledges himself the author. Shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it? Amos iii. 6, and ix. 4—11. Thus saith the Lord, behold I frame evil against you. I will set my face against you for evil. Behold I will watch over them for evil, and not for good, Jer. xviii. 11. and xliv. 11, 27. You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities, Amos iii. 2. And he hath confirmed his words, by bringing upon us a great evil. As it is written in the law, all this evil is come upon us: therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth*.

In this he displays the truth and justice of his moral government, that he certainly superintends the actions and ways of men: that his providence is over all: and that every creature is the object of his care. Such then as act contrary to his revealed will, oppose his providential government, and expose themselves to his righteous indignation: accordingly, as a righteous governor, he

* See Daniel's confession, chap. ix.

expostulates with his disobedient people; warning them of their danger, entreating them to return from their evil ways, that they may escape punishment.

It is observable, that these evils are chiefly to be found in the house of Israel. The people whom God had chosen for his own peculiar servants were guarded by the sanctions of purest morality, from that disobedience which must lay them open to those punishments threatened in his righteous laws. Judgment begins at the house of God. He will first punish the faults of his children, who, because he loves them, will not suffer them to be without correction. And if judgment begin at the house of God, what shall be the end of his enemies, who are in the world; these are often severely punished, and must finally be destroyed with the world. But is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?—God forbid. For then how shall God judge the world? But the Judge of all the earth will do right.

The nature and extent of punishment are regulated by the enormity of the moral evil, which hath given being to it. Every man shall receive according to his works. The righteous judge will not pass a more severe sentence than the nature of the crime merits, nor inflict severe punishment than is meet. He delighteth in mercy; he takes pleasure in extending and magnifying it: but he also is just and holy, and can, by no means, acquit

the incorrigible, impenitent guilty offender. In truth, such acquitment would be of no great advantage; because it gives no security against future offence.

This evil is felt through all nature in its present fallen state. It is experienced by every creature in every station of life. "The whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now." The whole creation here means every creature capable of enjoying happiness, or enduring misery. Their groaning and travailing in pain, intimates that there is a greater degree of misery than happiness in the creation; and that this is not confined to the body only, which is often bowed down with pain and weakness, and, in some pitiable objects, punishes and deforms them, from their birth to their death: but it applies to the mind also, which groans, being burdened with pain; pained with penal evil, the just reward of moral evil; that which we distinguish with the character of sin.

The principles with which mankind come into the world, are derived from the evil spirit which deceived our first parents, who leads captive the children of disobedience. Here we find their true origin. The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not. This blindness is the sin of unbelievers; their understandings are darkened through the ignorance that is in them. They are ignorant of God, of themselves, and their

duty: they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.

Were we to trace this evil through all its extent, we might follow it from the dangerous painful birth, in all the stages of life, to a cruel exit in death, and to eternal punishment. Every affliction of body or mind is a penal evil, for the mitigation of which learned professions are established; but the inefficacy of these proves the necessity which we now treat of. No skill inferior to infinite wisdom is sufficient to prescribe a remedy to answer the evil case before us; and no power, short of omnipotent, is able to apply it. How strong then is the necessity, that the only wise almighty God, who only can put an end to sin, should appear for the destruction and total removal of it! If the evil cannot be removed, with the safety of the person in whom it is found, by any other means than his taking unto himself a true human soul and body; his incarnation becomes so necessary, that neither the sin nor sorrows of mankind can be destroyed without it. The eternal Son of the Father, when he condescends to become the Son of man, is as incapable of moral evil, in any sense of the word, as it is impossible to remove the guilt of it, without bearing the punishment which it deserves. Here we see him submitting to penal evil, that by suffering the "just for the unjust," he might annihilate the guilt of the one, and destroy the miserries of

the other. This work necessarily devolves upon him, because no mere creature is equal to it.

Having opened the source from whence all our miseries arise, we may go forward, and take notice of the defilement and diseases of the soul, which also are the fruits and the consequence of sin. Sin defiles the soul, and makes it loathsome in his sight, who cannot look upon iniquity: his most holy and pure nature abhors the appearance of it; because it is an opposition to his existence, works, and worship. It pollutes the rational creature, and makes reason itself nauseous, because it acts contrary to the supreme reason of Him who hath given order and beauty to all nature. The mind and conscience of wicked men are defiled, being abominable and disobedient, and, unto every good work, reprobate: they will increase more unto ungodliness:—these are the things which defile a man.

There were ceremonial pollutions under the law, which had particular rules of cleansing, suited to the nature and degree of the defilement. The defiled person must be separated from the clean; the laws for purification were strictly to be adhered to, and these must be fulfilled before a reunion could take place between the congregation and the person excluded. This may teach us, that the soul, defiled by sin, separated from God and holiness, cannot be received into his favour till sin be pardoned, and the soul be washed in the fountain opened for uncleannses.

All immoralities flow from mental pollution. Inward sin is the cause of all outward defilement. For "The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." The unholy and impure dispositions of the fallen soul take pleasure in such defiling matters: for "They sleep not except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall." The wicked deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil, Psal. xxxvi. 4. Evil is then a sweet morsel under his tongue; it is pleasant to his taste; he drinks it down as new wine, and glories in it as if it were his chief good. The wicked man is as much gratified with the success of his hellish, impure pursuits, as the good man can be in the prosperity of truth and virtue. The joy of the former, it is true, is very short and illusory, like a blaze of straw, which is soon over, and extinguished for ever: but the joy of the latter is of a very different nature; it is pure and permanent.

There is necessity for a fountain, whose waters shall not fail, in which all this mental pollution, and moral defilement, shall be washed away. This is opened in the person of the incarnate Son of God: and Christians may rejoice abundantly in this truth—that the necessity for his incarnation was not greater than his readiness to come forward for the destruction of sin—the ruin of satan's

power—and the salvation of the souls and bodies of men.

Sin is the cause of all the diseases with which the human soul is afflicted: spiritual afflictions are no less certain than those which are found in the body: they are different effects flowing from the same cause. The defects, or imperfections, of the mind are not usually represented under the idea of diseases; but I see no reason why we may not make use of this metaphor, if, by it, we may better illustrate our subject. The Holy Spirit himself makes use of it, saying, the whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint; from the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores, Isa. i. 5, 6. Here we see fallen mankind in a sick, faint, and consumptive state; mangled with mortifying sores; overrun with spiritual maladies; afflicted with many kinds of diseases. Let us open some of them, entreating the most merciful Physician to heal them.

1. Levity. By this the mind is carried away with airy appearances, empty phantoms; which are of no manner of importance, have no weight or stability. This disease is so universal, that it is discovered in almost every conversation. In many characters it arises to a degree of mental insanity. Inconstancy and changeableness mark this disorder. A light mind is fond of trifling gaiety. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart

be hasty to utter any thing before God, for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few, Eccl. v. 2.

2. Ambition. This is an inordinate desire of greater wealth, power, and honour than divine Providence seems to allow. It is a disorder which shows the dissatisfaction and discontentedness of the mind; the ambitious soul is ever aspiring at attainments beyond its reach; and, stretching too far, often falls into disgrace, and wounds itself by miserable disappointment. But godliness, with contentment, is great gain. Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have, 1 Tim. vi. 6. Heb. xiii. 5.

3. Avarice. Immoderate love to the riches of this world, attended with vehement desire of acquiring more. This disease is of a very carnal and selfish nature. It chiefly manifests itself by the love of money, and hoards it up for the gratification of sordid self. It grasps with greediness what belongs to others, and makes an idol of what it has acquired. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him, 1 John ii. 15.

4. Credulity. By this the mind is easily imposed upon and deceived. A credulous person lies open to the devices of Satan. This opens the way to enflame every other distemper, because it receives with too much eagerness any thing

offered, and embraces it without due examination. This manifests a weakness, which is greatly to the hurt and dishonour of human nature. Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting, Gal. vi. 7, 8.

5. Pride. Haughtiness of mind: self-conceit: from which arises contempt of God, and a scornful disdain of men. I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart: it is, indeed, a haughty, hateful disposition, which is abominable in the sight of the Most High, who inhabiteth eternity. This is said to be the first evil. It appears first in our fallen nature; is seen in every mental disease; operates through every stage of our mortal life; the most difficult to be cured; and cannot be finally removed while the old man of sin lives in the body. See! boasting, prejudice, and vanity growing out of this, and causing vexation of spirit to the afflicted soul. Pride is the master sin, and first-born of the devil. It is truly the mark of the beast; a monster of iniquity, which deforms the man, and makes him loathsome. Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud, Prov. xvi. 18, 19.

6. Despite. This is a disorder of the mind,

in which we see the venom of hell itself. By it the whole man is enflamed with anger, malice, and hatred. It is an envious resentment to counteract the designs of another, to be revenged for some supposed, or real injury. A despiteful heart, and a despiteful mind, intimate an heart and mind filled with maliciousness, by which we see the malignity of sin operating against the spirit of grace, counting the blood of the covenant wherewith we are sanctified an unholy thing, Heb. x. 29. It treads underfoot the Son of God, and tramples on the blood which he shed to atone for our sins. It despises and spits at him with all malice. "For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully intreated, and spitted upon. And they shall scourge him, and put him to death, and the third day he shall rise again, Luke xviii. 38. "Thou hast seen it, for thou beholdest mischief and spite to requite it with thy hand," Psa. x. 14.

7. DECEIT. This is a malady of universal extent: all are subject to it: deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil, Prov. xii. 20. It is a fraud, a cheat, an artifice, a stratagem for imposition. The heart is deceitful above all things; nothing is so grievously afflicted with this distemper; other creatures are not touched with it: it has no being but in rational creatures: it is a perversion of reason; an opposition to conscience; and founded on lies. "Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying

lips, and from a deceitful tongue. What shall be given unto thee, or what shall be done to thee, thou false tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper, which burn fierce and long," Psal. cxx 2, 3, 4. This reward shall be given the deceitful and false tongue.

8. Covetousness. The object here is the immoderate desire of this present evil world; the gratification of it is immoderate gain. This is a disease that cannot be cured with money, and therefore the covetous mind is always pursuing it. An evil ulcer, which is never closed; a sore not to be healed with any thing in nature. There is a sense, in which it is a virtue to covet, 1 Cor. xii. 31; but this virtue arises out of the work of regeneration, which is the renewing of the soul, and shall be opened in the proper place, and manifests its recovery from this disorder. As a vice, it renders men the objects of abhorrence to God, and makes them cruel and oppressive to men. This evil grows with age: age weakens other vices, but strengthens this. "Mortify therefore your members, which are upon the earth—inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry," Col. iii. 5.

9. Idolatry. This we may call the religion of sin: here we find the diseased soul acting, in some sort, consistently with its spiritual nature. Notwithstanding it is so defiled and disordered, it cannot be divested of its ideas of a supreme Being,

whom it ought to reverence and worship. But sin has got so full possession, that it carries away the soul from the true object to worship idols. This is the work of sin opposing reason, in matters of religion. While reason exists it will assert the necessity of worshipping God. But if the soul be in a state of captivity, and in the prison of sin, as it is represented by the prophet, Isa. xlii. 7. Then we may easily conceive that reason is fettered and manacled by it. So that if there be any religion at all, it must be in this state of things, contrary to the eternal Supreme. It is set up and promoted to his dishonour. Sin, by idolatry, means to provoke and offend him: it is the nauseous, abominable pollution of all the defilement and diseases of the soul: it is an imposition on all that is good and holy. Hence it is no wonder that we hear it so condemned, and threatened with utter destruction.

We need but observe, in the last place, that all the errors and delusions, which have ever possessed the human mind, flow from, and are connected with, idolatry. This is devil worship; set up and established in all nations during many ages of ignorance, which Divine wisdom saw proper to permit. But now see the divinity incarnate, to put an end to the operations of satan, the miseries occasioned by sin, and the universal spread of deep-rooted idolatry! The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent, Acts xvii. 30.

What a flood of miseries overflow human nature! It is absorbed and sinking in them! Sin is the cause of weeping and gnashing of teeth; this spiritual pollution, and these mental diseases, have the bitterness of gall to every immortal soul. Nothing can be expected but tribulation and anguish where these prevail; the afflicted miserable creature meets trouble after trouble in the present state, which may convince him of the great necessity there is for the blessed divine Person, of whom we speak, to make an end of sin, and remove our miseries.

We have sufficient authority to enlarge this part of our subject, from many other metaphors which represent the odious destructive nature of sin; three or four of which we shall very briefly notice, and finish this discourse.

The most striking and impressive emblem of sin we meet with, is the disease of LEPROSY. It is a bodily disorder, and may well illustrate the evil of sin in the soul. It arises from the corrupted humours of the body, and spreads over every member. It is one of the most dreadful evils with which the human body can be afflicted. It is painful, nauseous, infectious, and mortal.

The leprous person was, under the law, separated from the company of the sound and pure: it was a disease which human skill could not cure; nothing but the power of God could remove it. The cure of it, therefore, was counted a miracle.

This disease was sometimes miraculously inflicted, for the punishment of particular sins, as in the case of Miriam, Gehazi, &c. &c.

Man, as a leprous creature in the sight of God, is separated from the divine presence: driven out, like Adam, from all happiness; and goes out, like Cain, from the presence of the Lord, followed with fear, and guilt, and misery.

The leper defiled every thing he touched, under the ceremonial law: his clothing, habitation, the furniture of his house, and all his utensils came under the curse of the law against leprosy: so every sinful thought, word, and work: every gratification and enjoyment that arises from sin, is under the curse of that law, which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, Rom. i. 18.

We frequently find this disorder called the PLAGUE; intimating the contagious, troublesome, tormenting nature of it. Sin, without doubt, in itself is an infectious plague; it contaminates and torments human nature in every department; it is the cause of all plagues, and excites the evil spirits of men to distress and torment one another, in nations and smaller communities. "From whence come wars, and fightings (or brawlings), among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts, that war in your members?" James iv. 1.

Solomon takes particular notice of the plague of the heart, in his prayer at the opening and dedica-

tion of the temple. "Whatsoever plague, or whatsoever sickness there be, and prayer and supplication is made by any man, who shall know every man the plague of his own heart, then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place," 2 Kings viii. 37, 38.

Sin may be called the plague of the heart, in opposition to other plagues mentioned by the king of Israel, which only afflict the body. So the sense is, those who are brought by their afflictions to a true and serious sense of the worse and inward plague of their sins, which are most fitly called the plague of the heart; because that is both the principal seat of sin, and the fountain from whence all actual sins flow:—or, as it is in another place, when every one shall know his own sore, and his own grief.*

We meet with another metaphor, very often used in the sacred Scriptures, equally pernicious and deadly as the plague of leprosy: it is insinuating POISON. Sin is compared to the poison of serpents, of dragons, of asps, and of vipers; all which have a mortal tendency. There are several kinds of poisons, as in the vegetable and mineral creation; each of which has the power of destruction. But it is that virulent matter found in the animal world, to which the allusion is most frequently made to illustrate the nature and effects of sin. Hence the following true description:—"The wicked are estranged from the womb; they

* See Pool's Annot. in loc. 2 Chron. vi. 29.

go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent; they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the voice of the charmers, charming never so wisely," Psalm lviii. 3, 4, 5.

Thus we see that sin is the MOST HORRIBLE THING. It is a privation of all good; it cuts off the creature from having any comfortable connexion with the author of goodness: it robs it of every thing that can be called good, and leaves it nothing but evil. Darkness, bondage, and misery in the extreme, are the genuine fruits of sin. All mankind, without exception, are in this most wretched state: not one have been found since Adam fell, who have not sinned and come short of the glory of God. Hence, suffering, lamenting humanity, opens and enforces the necessity of the coming of him, who can remove all this mass of misery. It may be well supposed, that the voice of loud, woeful lamentations, may reach the ears of him who hath mercy, and bowels of compassion for the most wretched. His omniscient eye surveys our helpless state, and his pitying love provides relief.

Surely, we need not proceed further in this dismal scene, to establish the necessity of his incarnation who only can change it. He sees the whole in one comprehensive view, and comes forward with omnipotent resolution, unconquerable courage, and invincible determination to remove

the cause of so many and great sorrows from the objects of his regard. Great and pressing is the necessity which calls him forth; sin must be destroyed and none but the Son of God is able to effect the destruction of it. Nor have we any authority to believe, that he could destroy sin and save the sinner, but by being made sin, that is, a sin offering for us, 2 Cor. v. 21. As the supreme governor it is easy to conceive he could destroy sin by a righteous act of judgment; but in this case we cannot see how the sinner could be saved. The destruction of sin, therefore, and the salvation of the sinner, are peculiar effects of his taking our nature, and humbling himself to be our kinsman redeemer.

Whatever necessity the nature and state of things exhibit for the appearance of any character, or the establishment of any office, from the beginning of time to this day, may well illustrate the necessity of his manifestation, who, having all fulness in himself, has not only authority to appoint whom he will, and establish what he pleaseth, but is also able to subue all opposition to his will, to remove all miseries from his people, and to restore them to their forfeited happiness.

We may observe in the last place, that notwithstanding the most evident proofs, and clearest illustrations, contained in the sacred Scriptures of the evil and malignity of sin, and that every man is a sinner; how great is the aversion of all to believe

it? The most moving representations hardly touch the mind. Most men hear, and may see the descriptions of sin, but very few indeed think or consider themselves as sinners. The sinful heart is so hard that it cannot feel its diseases. The dungeon in which the sinner lies, is so dark that he cannot see himself. It adds to the misery of his state, that he loves darkness. He prefers it to the light of divine truth which shows him what he is, how he is, where he is, and the wretchedness of his condition. He covers his guilty head in the straw of his cell, when the lamp of heavenly light shines into it, so that he can neither see himself, his situation, nor the benevolent Friend who comes to relieve him. He lies in his festering sores, and does not choose to have them discovered. He does not feel the mortal contagion, and cannot believe that he is infected, or that the things which are said of others are true concerning him.

But if he is to be cured, it is indispensably necessary to bring him to the light, or rather, it must be brought to him, that he may see, and be sensible of his maladies, and the malignity of his diseases. This may be attended with pain, and may cover him with shame and confusion; but it is unavoidable. The sinner must feel and know himself as such. He must open his eyes, and look into the glass of the divine law, and see the plague of his heart by its reflecting influence; this will show him the poison which is working his eternal ruin: it

will make him sensible of the deformity of his soul and point out the enmity of his carnal mind to the divine will; his want of conformity to the divine image; and that he is deprived of every heavenly excellency.

"This is the state and situation of all universally and without exception, considered as under the fall; they are all gone out of the way; there is none that doeth good, no not one. It is true, indeed, that all the inhabitants of the several nations of the earth, may, and do very much differ in their tempers, manners, customs, and dispositions; but as one observes—"Let an impartial judge take four unconverted men, or children, from the four parts of the world; let him examine their actions, and trace them up to their spring; and if he make some allowance for the accidental difference of their climate, constitution, task, and education; he will soon find their dispositions as earthly, sensual, devilish, as if they had been cast in the same mould. Yes; as oak trees are oak trees all the world over, though by particular circumstances some grow taller and harder, and some more knotty and crooked than others, so all unregenerate men resemble one another, for all are proud, self-willed, impenitent, and lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. Sin manifests itself among the black and white, savage and civilized nations, Turks and Jews, Heathens and Christians, whether they live on the banks of the Ganges, or the Thames, the Missisippi,

or the Seyne: whether they starve in the snows of Lapland, or burn in the sands of Guinea. It is not the character of a particular sect of men, of any peculiar nation, climate, or age only, but of man universally and in all ages." Lambert's Serm. vol. 2. page 9. 10.

DISCOURSE VIII.

The Offices of the incarnate Saviour necessary to effect the Destruction of Sin and Misery.

We now turn our attention to the blessed object of our illustration; that is, the Son of God, whose incarnation we see is so necessary for the removal of the cause of our miseries. We shall point out some of those offices, which he necessarily sustains, in order to accomplish this end, and take notice of his execution of them. Here we have subjects of superior excellency and glory; such as may animate our minds with great joy, after the dark scene we have passed through.

First. These offices imply his real and true humanity; for till he becomes man he cannot assume any office, or perform any useful services to the miserable race of Adam. As God, we contemplate the infinite perfections of his divine nature, and cannot conceive of any office. For divinity unconnected with humanity, submits to no such

services as an office intimates. It is only as mediator, God-man, that he is invested with authority to act in the capacity of a servant, Isa. xlii. 1, and xlix. 1—13. The human nature, united with the divine person of the Son of God, constitutes a character suitable for any office, or personal service which may be beneficial to mankind. He humbles himself therefore, and becomes man, that he may qualify himself for those duties which are incumbent on the Saviour of the world. He descends from his just and natural dignity, that he may become a servant, Isa. lii. 13. All other officers rise; they come up from low stations to higher; and are under the necessity of improving their qualifications for more honourable places, when called to occupy them. But here is one, who descends from the highest state to the meanest services; who, though qualified to reign, becomes the servant of servants. He assumes the human nature, that he may be his Father's servant, and the Saviour of men.

We take a little more particular notice of the King of saints in his sovereign capacity. He is the King of kings, in a more exalted sense than any rulers of the earth could ever assume. Some proud mortals have taken up the character, and gloried in their dominion over the governors, and provinces of their empires.

But the Lord Jesus Christ is the glorious, glorified, supreme head over all. To his authority

many kings, in various countries, have submitted; because his dominion and authority are of a spiritual, holy, immortal, saving nature. The greatest potentates have become his humble disciples, and acknowledged him their Sovereign. They have submitted to his laws, as holy, just, and good; and governed their subjects in obedience to him.

He wears his mediatorial crown in the highest most splendid glory. The sceptre of universal dominion in the heavens, and in the earth, is in his hand. His sovereignty is acknowledged by all nature; by angels and by saints; all bow to the supremacy of every office with which he is invested. The people who enjoy the benefits of them is the church of God, for whom he was incarnate, and which he hath purchased with his own blood. Here we see our glorious King and kinsman Redeemer, elevated on his seat of mercy, the throne of grace, Heb. iv. 14, 15, 16. See him condescending to the meanest offices! serving the lowest of his family; instructing babes; teaching young men the exercises of their spiritual armour, and directing fathers how to combat their enemies, and obtain the victory.

The meek and lowly Son of God stoops to become the teacher of men. Poor, ignorant, guilty creatures, enjoy the happiest benefits they can desire. They are under the instructions of infallible wisdom. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in their Instructor, from him they acquire

that knowledge, which only can make them wise unto salvation, which shows them the cause, and the means, of the forgiveness of their sins by his most precious blood, and the communication of his most holy Spirit. It is at his feet men learn the way of access to, and acceptance with, the eternal fountain of all felicity. The high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, when he becomes man, sees, with pity, the objects of distress; and hears, with compassion, their humble petitions. He interests himself most affectionately for them; and those for whom his infinite wisdom is so condescendingly exercised have no reason to fear the cunningly devised fables of men, or the manifold devices of satan.

We particularly observe, that he is an advocate with the Father. This office is of supreme efficacy, as it is established on the firm foundation of Emmanuel's obedience. Being a teacher sent from God, he finished that part of his work which belonged to the present state, and which was introductory to his priestly office in heaven. By virtue of this work, which he accomplished on earth, he acquired a right to intercede, or plead, as an advocate, or counsellor, for his people, who were ordained to eternal life with equal certainty as he was ordained to be an high priest. His intercession then does not consist so much in the humble supplications of a petitioner, as in the legal demands of a conqueror; who has but only to

express his will, in order to have it carried into execution. Therefore he addresses his Father in this emphatic language: I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, John xvii. 24.

This office is the most sublime and excellent of any with which the Mediator is invested. By it he is chiefly employed with God. It has a relation to the divine nature principally, and shows us what qualifications are requisite in him, who hath engaged his heart to approach unto God, Jer. xxx. 21. Mere humanity is not equal to this important station, but the Father's son is equal to it, and therefore fulfils it. All the other offices of our supreme head are founded in the nature of things, and have a relation to the persons and circumstances of men; but this is infinitely superior, as it includes not only these but also the eternal honours of the divine nature, and the necessary sovereignty of Jehovah.

He appears in the presence of God for us; on our behalf he exercises all the qualifications needful for, and included in, the office. His intercession then is the great security of our peace, happiness, and salvation. Without this we could hope for no great advantage from his wisdom as a prophet, or his government as a king. But the exercise of his love as a priest, in his intercession before the throne of infinite justice and holiness, is the grand security of the happy effect of his

other offices; of our personal safety from the enemies of our souls; and of our eternal felicity in the kingdom of glory. Our numerous transgressions make such an intercessor indispensably necessary; and, blessed be God, the high priest of our profession is the propitiation for our sins, 1 John ii. 1, 2.

He is also a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace is between them both, Zech. 6. 13. that is, between the sacerdotal and regal offices. The influences and beneficial effects of these two offices are united in his administration. By the first, he makes his people holy; and, by the second, he makes his subjects happy. He wears a crown peculiar to himself, composed of the inexpressible jewels of the eternal treasury in heaven, united with all the amiable excellencies that can be found in humanity; expressive of his glorious victories obtained over his prostrate foes. See the glorious rays of divine Majesty, beaming in every direction from the head of him who is seated in immortal state, connected with the most splendid excellencies of pure and unsullied virtue! such as might honour angels of the first order; but such as belong exclusively to himself as man and Mediator. These shine on his church in this dark and benighted world, and cause infinite joy in every department of it. Go forth, ye inhabitants of Zion, behold your Sovereign wearing the immortal crown of celestial majesty; a crown acquired by decisive victories over his and your enemies:

a crown which has never been dishonoured by any imprudent act of government; a crown which shall be eternally illustrious by the dignity of his person, and the righteousness of his reign; a crown to which no more glory or splendor can be added. Hence he is supreme in all his offices; and every officer in his kingdom receives his commission and authority from him, 2 Cor. v. 18—21.

The offices of our incarnate Saviour are so indispensably necessary, that sin cannot be destroyed, nor can satan be subdued without them. He is, therefore, a prophet, to expel the darkness of ignorance which hath covered the earth; the gross or thick darkness with which the people are covered. He is a light to lighten the minds of men; the sun of righteousness, to shine and illuminate their understandings; to warm and animate them with the beams of heavenly infallible truth; that they may be delivered from the pernicious delusions of error. Let sinful creatures embrace this sweet and pleasant light; for truly "the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." It is not the overpowering splendor of the eternal Majesty, which no eye hath seen, or can see; nor the essential glories of the uncreated Deity, which no creature can comprehend; but it is the light of divine mercy, shining in the person of the Son of God: the light of his glorious grace, fully manifested in his incarnation.

Our blessed Lord frequently spoke of himself

as the light of the world: signifying that he was as necessary to the spiritual state of men, as the light of the day to their natural or political state. This was one of the characters too, in which the holy prophets seemed with joy to represent the promised Messiah. "Therefore," said David, "the Lord is my light, and my salvation. God is the Lord, which hath showed us light."

He is truly "The light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," not more in a natural than in a spiritual sense. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined; a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes. And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his holy One for a flame; the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.

The Lord Jesus Christ comes with all the glory and brightness of divine and moral excellence. How necessary is his advent, who can dispel the darkness of ignorance, which is so universal in the world, remove the miseries which grow out of it, and by his gracious instructions diffuse joy and happiness over the immortal souls of his creatures, that he may lead and guide them in the way of peace, and secure them in it.

The diseases which we have seen in fallen humanity, make a Physician necessary. This is a character, under which we find the Son of God

acting towards men, and clearly intimates the infinite love and compassion of his heart. He must needs come to the poor afflicted creature, because it is impossible, in the nature of things, that he should come to be cured, or healed of any disorder. The lame, the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the paralytic, the possessed with evil spirits, the sick and infirm of every description, could not, of themselves, come to this heavenly Physician; but were either brought to him, or he came to them. And it is observable, that all to whom he came, or were brought before him by the care and industry of others, were perfectly cured of whatever disease they had. All the cures he performed on the bodies of men were complete and perfect. We never read of any relapse, either into the same complaint, or any other, after the patient experienced the application of his infinite skill.

This may illustrate the perfect soundness, with which he cures the souls of all who believe in him. He not only enlightens the understanding, but he cleanses the conscience from dead works, that we may serve the living God. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

The whole world lying in wickedness required such a skilful, spiritual Physician. One who could comprehend the disorders so universally prevalent, together with the remedies which were

necessary to be applied. Jesus Christ knew what was in man: he knew every disease of his soul, under whatever name it might be called: he was well acquainted with the nature and malignity of sin. Being the Searcher of hearts, he examines the case to the bottom, and brings to light the hidden things of darkness. The remedies necessary to effect a cure are wholly in himself: "The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin." This is a remedy of sovereign efficacy; of infinite virtue; because it is blood divine; the blood of God; of more value than all the blood that ever was, or can be created. Notwithstanding, it was poured out on the cross: but its virtue is retained in the vase of gospel truth and divine ordinances; to be applied to sinners by the hand of him who sits in the house of God, "As a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purge them as gold and silver; that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." He evidenced to the world that he was a spiritual Physician, and could cure the minds as well as the bodies of men. He came not to the righteous, who were whole, but to sinners who were diseased and miserable by sin, Heb. xix. 14, 15, Matt. xix. 12, 13.

This office-character of our blessed Saviour, we see often, applied to himself when he was in the world, intimating the great necessity we now treat of; and that without his incarnation, and the con-

sequent offices connected with it, no sinner could be cured of the malady of sin; no soul could ever have obtained health and happiness: the blindness of spiritual ignorance; the deafness of inconsideration; the fever of evil concupiscence; the swellings of pride; the vertigo of inconstancy; the delirium of constant levity, and the madness of passion, must have prevailed for ever, had not the Physician of souls appeared to destroy and remove them. The believer, then, may joyfully join with holy David:—"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness, and tender mercies." And with the holy apostle—"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory, dominion, blessing, and praise."

There are many other office-characters by which Emmanuel is distinguished in the holy Scriptures, which illustrate and establish the subject before us; such as his being an apostle; a special messenger sent from heaven. A bishop, to instruct mankind; a deliverer to release captive souls from slavery: a Redeemer to obtain eternal redemption for us: a Saviour, to give eternal life. These, and numbers more of equal importance, might be illustrated, and would afford strong conclusive arguments in support of the necessity of the incarnation. We may here see that the subject matter

of our illustration is far from being exhausted; but having advanced sufficient to elucidate and establish the necessity of such wonderful condescension in the eternal Creator, in the way of rational deduction, which we have chosen, we proceed to take notice,

Secondly, Of his execution of these offices. Where we find an office, we look for suitable dispositions and qualifications in the person who occupies it, and proper attention to every part of duty connected with it. Fidelity is indispensable to the faithful discharge of the trust reposed in him. Nor must he quit his post till every end is answered for which it was appointed. These rational, natural, or, I might call them, political observations, fully apply to him who is made of of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30.

We have a full description of the spirit and qualifications with which Emmanuel should exercise all his offices, given us by the prophet Isaiah in two places: the first is in the beginning of the eleventh chapter, where his nativity, and the blessings of his kingdom, are particularly stated. "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him;" he is therefore fit for the high office of Mediator: by "The spirit of wisdom and understanding" he is qualified for universal government: having "The spirit of counsel and might," he is able to direct all the operations of his servants, and to subdue all

their opponents. "The spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord, makes him of quick understanding" to distinguish between the reality and the appearance of things. We see him enriched with the whole armour of God in the highest degree: the two-edged sword of the Spirit is in his hand: the golden girdle of "righteousness and faithfulness" is girt about his loins: and he is fully prepared to reveal the whole counsel of God; to administer truth and grace to the human race; and to fill the earth with "The knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." This part of the description may have respect to the exercise of his offices, as they are applied by the ministry of his Gospel in the world; the other seems to have special regard to the church, and all the afflicted members of it. The offices of Christ, the anointed head of the church, are clearly spoken of in the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah. The whole of this chapter shows us the revival and restoration of the people of God, in consequence of these offices, exercised and applied by the anointed Saviour, together with the blessed fruits which they produce. He declares, that he is anointed with the Spirit of the Lord; and most certainly is, therefore, well qualified to administer consolation to the afflicted. Hence he gives them the beauties of holiness, and delivers them from the ashes of sin, which occasion sorrows and mourning. He pours on them the oil of joy, and

for the spirit of heaviness communicates the cheerful spirit of praise.

In the whole course of his incarnate state, we see him exemplifying these prophetic descriptions. Accordingly, as soon as he entered the church, of which John Baptist was the door-keeper, he opened his commission, and began to act upon it. He opened his mouth in proclaiming blessings on his hearers. See! what a spirit of compassion and benevolence runs through the whole of his first sermon, which great multitudes heard who were collected from many very distant parts of the country; and every following part of his ministry was equally consolatory to the afflicted. He does not begin with denouncing judgments and threatening condemnation; but with the most endearing displays of love, mercy, pity and condescending goodness.

What believing petitioner ever offered up a prayer to him, to which he did not instantly attend? What case of distress was ever brought before him which he did not relieve? What command did he ever give that was not immediately obeyed? The exercise of his power was irresistable: infernal spirits could not speak when he ordered them to be silent; nor could they keep their possessions when he commanded them to depart. The exercise of his mercy was equally remarkable, and no less invincible: it was accompanied with power to the blind, the lame, the

leper, the deaf, the dead. In merciful compassion he supplied the wants of thousands of his followers, when they were in danger of fainting by the way.

He was unwearied in his ministerial, prophetic office; journeying from place to place to instruct the ignorant. We find him employing whole nights as a priest, in prayer. In short, his absolute dominion and authority, was manifested in his controul of the elements, as well as over the minds of men. It is certain, that in all his actions on earth, he had a constant respect to the safety, and comfort of his followers: we never find him exercising any office purely and personally for himself. His disciples, whom he had chosen, were not only witnesses of all he said and did, but were also partakers of the benefits of every word and work.

Notwithstanding the infinitely great authority of every office, with which our incarnate Redeemer is clothed; we never find any of them exercised but in the most humble, condescending, and engaging manner. We never see any thing of the austere, morose, or forbidding kind; he did not, in disdain, turn his face away from any who came into his presence; nor did a frown ever becloud his brow, when a poor needy creature approached him, to intimate they were not welcome; nay, on the contrary, he invites the most needy to come the most freely, Matt. xi. 28.

If further proofs were necessary to illustrate these observations, we might adduce almost every

name and character recorded in the sacred history of our blessed Lord; particularly Levi, called from the receipt of custom; Zaccheus the publican; Simon the leper; Mary Magdalene; the woman of Samaria; and numbers more, who experienced the saving efficacy of the offices which were indispensably necessary, for the salvation of their souls, and the destruction of sin and sorrow. The necessity for them in our glorified Emmanuel, and of the exercise of them in his church through all ages, is sufficiently manifest. No sinful creature has ever been received into the kingdom of heaven, but by the application of them. Nor can any hope to be saved from sin, and the miseries which it brings, both in time and eternity, but by the same person applying the same means. Notwithstanding his exalted state, at the right hand of the Majesty on high, he exercises all the offices connected with his mediatorial character, for the same blessed ends and purposes; and shall continue to exercise and apply them, till he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power; when every enemy shall be subdued to rise no more; and every cause of misery shall be removed for ever.

He is still Emmanuel, God with us. He sees our distresses; hears our groanings; and is with us, to redress all our grievances. He hath united himself to us, in the most endearing, condescend-

ing manner; assuming characters of the nearest relationship; and offices which shall produce the most happy effects. He submits to the lowest services that can be beneficial to us. He came not to be ministered to, but to minister; and to lay down his life a ransom for many.

Our adorable, glorious Redeemer, comprehends in himself the "Fulness of the God-head bodily;" and "Took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses" personally: that by the merciful, omnipotent operations of the first, he might overcome and totally remove the effects of the last. Who can sufficiently adore, magnify, and praise the condescending God! Who bows the heavens to come down! Who in mercy visits sinful miserable man! Who takes up his nature to cure it; his name to exalt it; his guilt to destroy it; and his soul to save it. See, Emmanuel preaching, praying, suffering, and dying for us! See him rising from the dead, and ascending on high; leading captivity captive; receiving gifts for men; and taking possession of the glory which he had with his Father, before the world began! But we shall finish this discourse, and this part of our illustration, by gathering together the leading particulars of it in

A RECAPITULATION.

We have seen human nature in its primeval state, without any kind of evil, in the perfection of beauty, holy, and happy.

If man had continued in the blessed condition in which he was placed by his Creator, there would have been no occasion, or necessity for the incarnation of the Son of God. His manifestation in the flesh, for any thing we know, would never have taken place. But man sinned, he became a rebel against his Creator, and plunged himself into manifold woes from which it was not possible he could redeem himself. He must, therefore, become the prey and triumph of that destroyer, who first seduced and made him a transgressor. Being guilty, and miserable, he could not be restored to innocence and true happiness, by any other means than by the interposition of his Creator, whose infinite perfections shall all appear in his recovery and salvation. It was highly necessary, that he who formed him, should come and put himself in the sinner's place, both to subdue his enemies and reclaim him to allegiance and duty. This was an act of mercy to wretched man, but of justice, and righteous vengeance, to those who had ruined him. The Redeemer's heart being in the very necessary important work of redemption, he joyfully submitted to every thing requisite to accomplish it; and therefore to become man that he might save men.

The fall and misery of mankind, so fully authenticated in the sacred oracles; so clearly proved by the experience of all ages and generations; constitutes the first ground, on which we establish the necessity we have endeavoured to illustrate. This

is a ground of infinite extent, or a reason for the incarnation which surpasses every capacity, but his who is the fountain of reason, and is able to find ways and means to accomplish this happy end.

A second ground of necessity for this stupendous act of humiliation in the eternal Son of God, is, that he could not be so much glorified by any other means. The eternal perfections of deity must be glorified, because they are infinitely and unspeakably glorious. For the honour and the glory of God all things exist: no other reason can be assigned for creation. But we turn from the creature to contemplate the Creator, assuming the nature of a fallen, feeble creature. This must, ultimately, terminate to the praise of the glory of his grace.

If all creation were annihilated, and no species of creatures left to know or magnify him; the glory of his essential perfections could not be lessened; the eternal, self-existent Being could suffer no loss in himself, were there neither angels nor men in existence. They are only instruments which he has formed for his glory. Were these broken and destroyed, he could, instantly, raise up millions of others. But we have seen that it will be much more for the glory of all his perfections, to raise up those that are fallen, to restore them to their lost dignity, to cure them of all their maladies, and to place them in a state of perfect security, in which they shall be safe from all future dangers.

This is more than a new, material creation. It is regenerating both the creature and its condition, by means which speak its value infinite. The creature that is an enemy to God, and an enemy of the most malicious, envious, spightful, inveterate nature; must be changed, or renewed by such means as are suitable to the end. The state into which it has brought itself by sin and guilt, must be altered; for it is most wretched. The imputation of sin must be taken off; that death may cease. And the sinful inclination must be removed; that sorrow may be destroyed.

No creature can effect such a change on itself, as to render it worthy of the divine favour; nor is it in the power of one mere creature to renovate another. The highest and the best can only obey for themselves, and their most perfect obedience has no merit that can be imputed to others who have transgressed: the weight of guilt is too heavy for created strength: and finite wisdom has not skill sufficient to alter that inclination or disposition to evil, which we have seen in fallen humanity. Whatever attempts self-righteous men may form, to reccommend themselves to a just and holy Creator, must in the present state of things totally fail; nor are speculations of this sort ever countenanced in the sacred records; because, they are unworthy of the divine notice. But the plan of glorifying the divine perfections proposed and brought forward by the Son of God, whose delights

were with the sons of men, was highly pleasing to the Father, and worthy of his acceptation: hence he was chosen and appointed to the work, and willingly undertook it.

We have seen the covenant of grace formed on this divine scheme, and that it secures the glory and honour of all the perfections, persons, and counsels of deity. The rights of the divine government over all, especially rebellious creatures: the ruin of sin, satan and death: the translation of man from misery to happiness: and, finally, to the eternal enjoyment of God in the kingdom of heaven. These blessed ends, so highly necessary, could not be obtained but by the incarnation of a divine person, in whom all possible perfection is found. Here, we see a strong necessity establishing the subject of our illustration.

We have pointed out a third reason, to illustrate and establish the necessity of this great event; and that is, the honour and dignity of those laws, which it pleased the Almighty to place mankind under. These must be maintained, whatever becomes of the transgressor. It is the way through which a communication is kept open between God and the creature; the way in which his love and merciful kindness may yet find the fallen ruined sinner: it must not therefore be removed, or finally shut up; for in that case there can be no hope. But if the law exists, the spirit and authority of it must be supported; because of the intrinsic excellency of

its nature. Being holy, just, and good, in every part, and containing a delineation of the moral perfections of God, on this ground it ought to be magnified, and honoured, in the highest degree: for this reason its dignity must be supported.

Every degree of indignity with which this most righteous law is insulted by the disobedience of man, is an opposition to the infinitely gracious author of it, of which he will not neglect the punishment. He will maintain the authority of his own institution, and support the honour of it, that his authority and government may be magnified by every subject. He cannot be indifferent to the reputation of it; for in such a case he would be the author of confusion, and not of order among his creatures.

We have seen the happy scheme for human government trampled upon by ungrateful man; that he has rendered himself forever incapable of perfect obedience: and that he cannot satisfy for past offences, but by sufferings which must destroy him. As, therefore, he can neither satisfy for past demands, nor give security for future obedience in his own person; he must be indebted to the good will, generosity, and ability of another, who is able to answer all, and give the satisfaction for him which is demanded: or the law shall be magnified in his eternal condemnation and punishment.

The misery of transgressors is but a poor unpleasant way of satisfying such demands, though it is

the best payment the guilty is able to make. But when the eternal Son of God comes forward, and offers full satisfaction for all past and future demands: he must be approved of as a most suitable and worthy substitute. Payment must be made in the nature and person of the real offender. He submits to the propriety and necessity of it; and declares he "Will magnify the law, and make it honourable." He here engages for the dignity of every institution which divine wisdom hath established; whether it be known by the name of the law of nature, or of grace; of morality, or religious ceremonies; or whatsoever concerns the persons or happiness of men.

We have entered more fully into this part of the subject than any other, apprehending it the most important. We have shown what the law is in its nature, and what it does in its effects: that the divine nature of Emmanuel is more excellent, and therefore it is highly honoured by his submission; to become subject he must become man; no other creature could give satisfaction but that which had sinned. The man was the sacrifice, and suffered "The just for the unjust;" and the divinity gave efficacy and value to it. His divine person therefore must, of necessity, come under that law, which, to Adam, was a covenant of life by the works of perfect obedience; but he failed, and fell under the curse. The Redeemer, then, must come under the punishment threatened, and be

made sin by the imputation of it to him; and he gave himself "An offering and a sacrifice to God, of a sweet smelling savor," to make atonement, and give satisfaction for sinners.

It has been observed, that every believer who is a member of Christ's body, shall honour and magnify the law by a cheerful obedience to all its precepts; it justifies the believer, and he adorns it by a life and conversation, in some measure, suitable to its nature and requisitions. The condemned and miserable creature is released from its obligation to pain and punishment; it is legally restored to its former estate and glory; all which is effected through the humiliation of him who is "God over all, blessed for ever."

The fourth and last reason, on which we establish the necessity of the incarnation, is the destruction of sin, and the removal of all our miseries; without it, sin and sorrow could not be destroyed. To illustrate this, we have considered this evil in many affecting views, pointing out the nature and malignity of it: sin is that evil which carries ruin and death with it. It is the cause of all penal evil, which cause must be removed, that the effect may cease. Hence an omnipotent all-wise Redeemer becomes indispensably necessary: the Son of man must come to seek and save that which was lost. If he declines this service, Satan must reign and sin prosper: the eternal God must be insulted, and his creatures must also be misera-

ble: but it is the fixed resolution of his infinite mind, that satan and sin shall not retain their dominion. The evil spirit must be checked and punished, and sin must be destroyed. This illustrates the pressing necessity for the coming of the Son of God, that he may destroy the works of the devil, and release the souls of men from his tyranny.

All the offices necessary to this work he exercises with the most uncontrouled influence, and shall reign till he hath put all enemies, and every evil, under his feet. He will subdue death, and destroy the iniquities of his people.

The numerous mental diseases which we have taken notice of, are the effects and fruits of sin. The leprosy is too powerful for any, but the almighty agency of him, who can cure it with a word. The poison is too insinuating to be restrained or eradicated, by any but that infinitely wise skilful physician, who searches the heart and tries the reins. He hath come in the flesh, and examined the melancholy case of perishing sinners. It is only from his advent, the hopes of recovery must arise. He hath laid a solid foundation for these hopes, by assuring us that a perfect cure is practicable, and that he is both able and willing to effect it. Hence miserable, afflicted creatures, may fervently pray for the application of those means by which they may be made whole.

Thus we have endeavoured to illustrate, or ex-

plain, the necessity of the incarnation; and have founded our sentiments on the firm ground of matters of fact, established in the unerring oracles of the sacred Scriptures, and the nature of things, as they exist in the present state.

Part Second.

THE REALITY OF THE INCARNATION PROVED.

DISCOURSE I.

The Son of God, the promised Seed of the Woman. The Blessing of Abraham. The Shiloh. The Prophet.

HAVING finished the first part of our work, we now enter upon the second; in which we propose illustrating the proof and reality of the incarnation of the Son of God. In order to this, it is necessary that we should consider the prophecies which foretel this great event; and then enquire, whether ever a person has appeared in the world, in whom all that the prophets have said, concerning him, fully agree. If it be necessary that a Saviour should come, which I hope has been fully established, it is also highly proper, and indispensably requisite, that he should be spoken of, and all the circumstances of his person and advent, as far as they can be known, proclaimed abroad, and religiously observed. Hence the importance of the subject requires the most serious and close attention. The honour of Reve-

lation is equally concerned here, as the glory of God, and the happiness of man, in the former part: we must, therefore, travel over the sacred ground with care.

The truth of prophecy being established, because founded on the divine veracity, opens the way to consider the subjects revealed! We do not propose to pay any attention to those prophecies which respect the empires, nations, and states of this world; or any great personages of a merely human character, however excellent or useful; but to consider those which, from the beginning of the world, have pointed out that divine Person, whose incarnation we have shown to be so necessary. The Almighty, from all eternity, foresaw what necessity would arise within the narrow limits of time for the manifestation of his compassion and mercy. The fall of mankind, and its effects, were not hid from him. Sin, and all the miseries of it, were open, and without a covering, to his omniscience. Wherefore, preparation being made for the event, the first was revealed and applied as soon as the last took place: a Saviour was promised immediately after the offence.

The reality of the INCARNATION is no less necessary to be attended to, than the necessity of it; that we may see the superstructure as well as the foundation it stands on. Having explored this at some length, and found the rock on which the whole fabric of true religion stands, we now

proceed to illustrate the certainty of his coming, who shall support and establish it, together with the reality of his being come, that we may rest satisfied that Jesus Christ is he The proof of this we shall find in the holy Scriptures, and shall therefore consider—

1. The prophecies;
2. The sacrifices of the Old Testament: and,
3. The history of Jesus Christ in the New.

By comparing and laying these together, we shall see that the Messiah was not more certainly promised to the Fathers, than he is come to us their children; and that all the benefits of life and godliness flow from his incarnation.

First, THE PROPHECIES.

Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man. The prophets spake not of themselves, what, and when they pleased. Human policy and contrivance are wholly out of the question here. The invention of man, in its purest and most perfect state, could never have devised such things as the prophets have foretold. Man is no way concerned in the prophecies of old time as an inventor, or author of them. God takes this honour unto himself; all Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. But, in the first prophecy, God himself was the prophet; Adam and Eve, the church, and the old serpent the wicked one; to each of these God spake according to the various

circumstances in which they stood; and, wonderous it is to us, at so great a distance, to hear the voice of the Lord addressing guilty creatures. We see mercy and justice acting under the influence of love to fallen creatures. Mercy exhibits a remedy to the human race, now sinful and miserable, which lays a foundation for hope and consolation: justice denounces sentence against sin, and threatens the malicious transgressor with the deserved reward of iniquity. But let us look more minutely into some of the first promises of Christ, in the present discourse.

We shall consider here only the four following: 1. The seed of the woman, as promised to our first parents. 2. The blessing of Abraham, in whose seed all nations of the earth should be blessed. 3. The Shiloh, or ruler, spoken of by Jacob, who should descend from his son Judah; and 4. That prophet whom Moses foretold, who should be like unto him. A brief illustration and improvement of these will be sufficient for the present.

First, The seed of the woman, which is thus spoken of—"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." This is the first prophecy of the incarnation, and delivered by the Lord God in the presence of our first parents, addressed to the old serpent: in this he hears condemnation to himself, and redemption to them, by means which could

never enter into the mind of a creature. Who, or what, could this seed of the woman be, who should be able to bruise a head, so powerful, wise, crafty, enterprising, and successful as the serpent? He had raised an insurrection in heaven, and had influence enough to carry off many adherents in his rebellion. He was more subtle and crafty than any of his adherents, and more cunning than Adam himself, and therefore over-reached him. He infused into him the poison of sin with the forbidden fruit. Who then can be intended by this seed? He must needs be some great One, such as never has been heard of before. He was to be the seed of the woman, in contradistinction to the seed of the man. The woman, in nature, is the weaker vessel, and was first in the transgression; it was through the woman satan gained his purposes against God, and now God turns the same instrument against him, and declares, that sin shall be destroyed by the same means through which it was introduced; that the woman shall have a seed, or an offspring of her own, who shall vindicate the honours of God, rescue fallen humanity, and destroy the power and authority of the serpent.

The seed of the woman, signifies, a person who shall have a particular work, and qualifications suitable for it. The work is intimated in this prophecy, which is, to bruise the serpent's head,

and signifies, the same as to destroy the devil and all his works.

This person is one of a peculiar character, he stands singly by himself without any to precede, or succeed him in any respect; he may be typified, but can never be equalled; because, he is both a divine and human person. He is not only the seed of the woman as to his human nature, from whom he becomes really man; but, he is also the the woman's Creator, as to his divine nature; and therefore, gives her existence, life, and salvation; as certainly as he takes humanity of her. The Lord God who now gives the prophecy should strictly accomplish it, in the fulness of time; and, therefore, the seed of the woman must be born; and, through death destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil,

We have here an epitome of divine revelation: the whole Gospel is contained in this prophecy; it is a beautiful miniature of the plan of salvation; in which we see all the persons, parts, and particulars of it. Here, we have the Creator, and his creatures; the judge examining his criminals, and dealing with them according to their works; exercising mercy in the midst of judgment; promising to the objects of his compassion, innumerable blessings by the means of a suffering Saviour; who in the conflict should be more than a conqueror. He should bruise their head, and crush them to death, whilst they should, but for a time, wound his flesh.

We are not to understand these words, *thy seed and her seed*, to signify only two individual persons at irreconcileable enmity one with another; but, a whole race of persons, ranking themselves under these two separate heads. These stand opposed to each other in the whole Scripture, and act from principles and motives quite opposite to each other in their nature and tendency. *Thy seed*, which is the serpent's party, seems at present to be in power; they were included in their representative now receiving sentence. They were condemned to low and base gratifications: "Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life;" and finally, thy head shall be bruised by *her seed*, who is Emmanuel; who shall be born for this end and purpose. It will require no more than a stamp of his heel, to crush the head of that old serpent, the devil; he shall, therefore, set his foot on his neck, and triumph openly over him. That head, which is at enmity with God, in which is all the life, power, energy, craft, and stinging spite of the whole body, shall be laid flat and motionless on the earth, by the child born of the feeble woman. This is the doing of the Lord and wonderous in our eyes.

The man has no agency here; he is altogether set aside; that the seed of the woman ALONE may have the honour of restoring the human nature. Therefore, a virgin shall conceive by a supernatural power, which in itself is no more wonderful than

the creation of man, or the formation of the virgin woman from a rib of his side. This prophecy, or promise, of the seed of the woman, was confirmed and illustrated by many others, as we shall see in course, and particularly thirty-two centuries and an half after this was made. The Lord God of the holy prophets said, Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel, Isaiah vii. 14. And again, in one hundred and thirty-eight years after this prediction, he declares, For the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man, Jer. xxxi. 22.

These declarations, by two such eminent prophets, (whose credentials from heaven were so well attested,) concerning the seed of the woman, appear so plain, that we cannot mistake their application to the incarnation of the Son of God; and they wholly set aside the agency of a guilty creature in the production of this immaculate seed, as is clearly seen in the account of the birth of Jesus.

Secondly, The blessing of Abraham. This is a continuation and enlargement of the promise made to our first parents; and, as it was renewed to this holy man, and promised to his family, it was a personal and domestic blessing to him. But it was frequently intimated to him also, that all nations should enjoy the benefits of this blessing, which was so universal in its nature. In the former prophecy we have seen the Saviour in his twofold capacity, viz. a divine and human person, proceed-

ing from the woman *only*: this distinguished personage shall bless the whole world, and shall come into it through the person and family of this friend of God*.

How great and extensive must such a blessing be; whether it belongs to this family, or to all the families of the earth. He brings all the blessings of truth and grace into the world, to enrich the poor and miserable souls of his creatures; in him dwells the fulness of the godhead as the Son of God; and it hath pleased the Father that in him him should all fullness dwell, as the son of man *a partaker* of the human nature, by whom it should be universally blessed. He was rich in the personal possession of all divine perfections; the eternal, inexhaustible treasures of the kingdom of heaven were in his hands, and at his disposal; hence he was well qualified to supply all the wants, which the perishing sons of Adam had brought themselves into.

This holy man was called out of his native country, to sojourn in a strange land, where he had no friend but his God; his presence and protection made him happy; he enjoyed the blessings of Providence in great abundance, and was revered as a king and prophet by all who knew him: amidst all the prosperity which attended him, he still was without a proper heir, who might, after him, inherit his substance: this, doubtless, he long

* See Jehoshaphat's prayer, 2 Chron. xx. 7. Isa. xli. 8.

wished and prayed for, with submission to the divine will; at length, after a sufficient trial of his faith and patience on this head, God was pleased to promise him a son, by Sarah his wife. Their time of life excluded all hopes of any offspring; because they were now old. But their faith and hope were again revived, and strengthened beyond contradiction, when, at the same time, they were assured, that the son of their old age, whom they were to name Isaac, should be an eminent representative of him who should be the BLESSING of all mankind, as well as of his posterity. That divine power, which was necessary and all-sufficient to enable a virgin to conceive and bring forth a son, according to the stipulations of the covenant of grace; should, also, enable Sarah, now so much beyond the time of life, to bring forth her first-born, with whom the covenant of circumcision should be established. They knew of, and believed in, the seed of the woman, which had been promised to their first parents upwards of two thousand years before; but now they were blessed with further discoveries of him, by bringing into the world one of the most eminent types that ever should prefigure, or represent him.

When we contemplate this *blessing*, both in the type and the antitype, it is infinitely great and glorious; Isaac was a real and great blessing to his parents, his family, and the church of God. He was many years the subject of promise, as the Son

of God was of prophecy for many ages; his birth was altogether extraordinary; it was, indeed, a miracle; that they, as good as dead, should embrace a son; but the promise must be fulfilled; God is faithful and true, and cannot deny himself; and therefore he must be born who shall be the the cause of joy and laughter* in their old age, when the joys of youth are withered, to blossom no more: the numerous family, of which these sages were the head, partook of the joy which the birth of the promised seed gave them; every member felt the blessing, and laughed with joy; and, doubtless, were not ignorant of the great event, and universal blessings to mankind illustrated thereby. "For he commanded and instructed his children, and his household, after him, that they should keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord might bring upon Abraham that which he had spoken of." The church had, on this occasion, great cause of joy; not only that an illustrious member was born and added to their number, who should be a lawful successor to all their public offices, but that, in him they saw so much of the Saviour, who should redeem their souls from all evil, and raise them to eternal glory.

But the principal thing in which Isaac typified the promised Saviour was, that memorable offering which he made of himself to God, in obedience

* The word Isaac signifies laughter, the effect of joy.

to the will of his Father, when he was commanded to sacrifice him on one of the mountains of Moriah. This was, doubtless, the severest trial that ever the father of the faithful endured; his patience had been long tried in waiting for the promised son and heir; Sarah's was quite tired out, and therefore her carnal policy suggested a means of fulfilling the promise by her maid Hagar: but Ishmael, her son by Abraham, was not the person intended by God, either to be a progenitor, or a representative of his only begotten Son; it was in Isaac the seed should be called. When the holy patriarch, therefore, received the divine mandate, saying, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest; and get thee unto the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering on one of the mountains, which I will tell thee of," what severer shock could his faith feel than these words contained? But being certain of the divine will in this particular, and seeing the day of the incarnation and sacrifice of the Redeemer of the world, perhaps, in the whole of this tragical affair; he consulted not with flesh and blood, but went, without delay, to the place, and without hesitation bound and laid his willing son on the wood, and on the altar.

This act of obedience was followed with a confirmation of all the blessings before spoken of; and as one observes, "The whole history is so amazing, that we know not, whether we should most admire

the strange commandment, or the unparalelled obedience. Isaac, it is true, was not sacrificed; and there was no need that God should raise him from the dead, as the patriarch, perhaps, expected. But as he was, in a manner, a dead man during all the three days that intervened betwixt the sentence being passed against him, and the reversing it by the heavenly voice, it may be truly said, that, in a figure, he received him from the dead*." Exactly so; our true Isaac was received from the dead, not in a figure only, on the third day, but really. Like Isaac, he felt no harm; and after he had plagued death, and destroyed the power of it, and removed the terrors of the grave, he returned to his father's house, from whence he came, and became the father of many nations, who are begotten again to a lively hope, by his resurrection from the dead; on which he shall see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied; for he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

The blessing of Abraham, therefore, is the promised seed of the woman; of whom he and his only son should be illustrious progenitors. From them, and their posterity he should take his descent, raising them up, by his special providence to be the witnesses of his personal appearance, when he should come to bless all nations of the earth. He is the *blessing* of all blessings: nothing but

* Mac Ewen on the types.

blessings accompany and follow him. All temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings flow from him; he is the author and promoter of every good thing, for soul and body, in the world, and in the church.

After the blessing of Abraham was come, and the blessings of his Gospel were spreading abroad in all nations, the apostle of the Gentiles assures us, "This was CHRIST;" saying, "The Scripture preached the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many, but as of one; and to thy seed, which is Christ." It is observable, that these promises were made to Abraham about the middle of the time, between the first prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his incarnation. Abraham was born A. M. 2008, and the birth of our blessed Lord was 4000.

In all the generations preceding Abraham, the promised seed, though known and worshipped by the church, was very little further made known, than by the first promise; but after his day the promises were more frequent and full. Isaac had no new revelation of him different from his father. But Jacob, his grandson, points him out more fully in his office-capacity, as

Thirdly, the Shiloh, or ruler. The same blessing had been repeated and confirmed to him, as had been promised to his father and grandfather; but now, on his death-bed, just before he leaves

the world, the Holy Ghost reveals to him which of his sons shall be the progenitor of the promised Saviour. The words of his prophecy are:—"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." This prediction was delivered in Egypt, where the twelve tribes of Israel were at present sojourning, and is a very extensive enlargement on the former. The person of the Son of God, and the blessings of his incarnation, are the only two leading things hitherto pointed out. Here we infer the tribe he is to belong to, which shall, therefore, be exalted into royalty, and give laws to the house of Israel. We see clearly the commission with which he is sent; not to Israel only, but to people of all nations, to rule or to govern them with the blessed Gospel, which is the sceptre of his authority. The time of his coming is also intimated, when Judah, or the Jews so named from him, shall lose the supreme authority; and lastly, the blessed consequences of his coming; the people shall be gathered unto him.

This is a most extensive prophecy; it contains the history of the church of God, to the times of the Gospel dispensation, under the theocracy, and the royal government of the tribe of Judah; the officers and authority of the blessed Saviour, who should be born in the fulness of time, and exhibit a commission under the broad seal of heaven, to

exercise dominion over all things, and all creatures. He is the Shiloh sent to rule; one that is to lay down rules or laws for the government of the consciences, as well as for direction of the lives and conversations of men. When the blessed Jesus was in the world, he frequently adverted to this prophecy, and distinguished himself by this character; declaring openly, that he was sent by the Father. But their blinded prejudiced minds would not suffer his enemies to see their Shiloh here foretold, in a person they thought so much beneath their notice, and therefore blasphemed his high pretensions, when he said he was the Son of God.

In this prophecy the time of his coming, or incarnation, is also intimated: Shiloh, the sent of God, shall be born before the sceptre and lawgiver shall depart from Judah. These two events are stated; the one to mark out and distinguish the other; so that if the supreme authority be departed from Judah, as his children themselves still surviving and sojourning in the various parts of the earth, must and do acknowledge; then Shiloh is come; the one that is already sent is not to be sent again; in vain do they look for another.

All the pains that ever have been taken with the Jews, to convince them from this text, and many others equally plain, that their promised Messiah is most certainly come, have hitherto proved ineffectual. They continue still ignorant

of the darkness which overspreads their minds; they cannot see the completion of their own prophecies in the person of Christ; though they all meet and centre in him. From this celebrated prophecy, we might enter into a course of argumentation with this people, and proceed from one prophecy to another, to manifest their infidelity, even in those Scriptures which they believe were delivered to them by the Almighty himself. Here our limits will not allow us to say much, nor is it so much the conversion of the Jews as a defence against the defection of the believing Gentiles, which is intended in this part of our work.

But to sum up the whole on this prophecy, in the words of an able writer; "The sceptre and the law-giver remained among the Jews, till both began to be taken from them by the Romans, on their reducing Judea into the form of a Roman province; and then Christ, the Shiloh promised, began his coming as the Messiah, by then entering on his Father's business, for which he was sent. And that this exactly fell in with the time of this change plainly appears; for Christ was then in the twelfth year of his age, and the twelfth year from Christ's birth was that whereon Caponius entered on his government: for Herod lived one year after the birth of Christ; and after the death of Herod, Archelaus reigned ten years; and the next year after, the Romans seized Judea, and made it a province of their empire. Christ, therefore, first

appeared in the temple as the Messiah at that very time, when the sceptre and lawgiver first began to depart from Judah; and sixty-two years after that, this departure was fully completed, in the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem, and the utter abolishing of the whole Jewish polity, and constitution of government, in that land, which hath never since either there or any where else been again revived *."

Fourthly. We are now to consider that prophet whom Moses foretold, who should be like unto him: he hath not only recorded these prophecies of the Son of God, which we have considered, and others of other persons, in the knowledge of which he was taught by the Holy Ghost; but he hath also given us some prophecies which may be called his own, respecting the church and her Redeemer. Most certainly he foresaw the incarnation, and therefore gives a minute description of the Saviour of the world, by the office which he should particularly exercise in his incarnate state. His prophecy is very express and particular, and runs thus: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me, unto him ye shall hearken." And again, saith God, "I will raise thee up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him; and it

* See Prideaux Connec. part II. lib. 9. p. 662 to 665.

shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." That this is a prophecy of the Son of God, all commentators almost agree; and it exhibits a comparison between the Jewish legislator, and this divine person, as the one was a son, and the other a servant in the house of God. They perfectly resembled each other in many particulars, as they were public officers in the church of God; they rise eminently above all others, and manifest a divine authority to act in a superior capacity, particularly as lawgivers and founders of the dispensations, which are known by their respective names: for the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

In many particulars we might find a resemblance between these two prophets. The type and the antitype so exactly correspond, that we may well adopt the learned Dr. Jortin's interrogation, and ask—"Is this similitude, and correspondence in so many things between Moses and Christ, the effect of mere chance? Let us search all the records of universal history, and see if we can find a man so like to Moses as Christ was, and so like to Christ as Moses was. If we cannot find such a one, then have we found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God *."

* See Dissertations on the Prophecies by the late Lord Bishop of Bristol, disser. vi. vol. I. p. 91—99.

The whole comparison may be reduced to these four general observations:—1. As Moses was a deliverer from bondage, slavery, and misery to the persons of the Israelites; so was Jesus Christ to the souls and bodies of his redeemed, who were in bondage to the law, in slavery to sin and satan; and upon this account groaning under misery. In this respect Christ is infinitely superior to Moses; as the deliverance of the first is only temporal, but of the second eternal.

2. Moses was a Mediator for Israel; he interceded for them, when their provoking sins incensed the just wrath of God against them. Jesus Christ is also the Mediator between God and man; but for his intercession, the wrath of God would break out, as a fiery deluge against the best of men, for the meanness of their best works; our deliverance would be insecure without it, and comparatively of small advantage.

3. The legislation of both we need not say more on; in this they are exactly alike, as to the ground of their authority, and the reason of their laws. It was,

4. As a prophet, that Moses represented the Son of God in his incarnate state. The sphere of action in the first, was limited to the twelve tribes only; that of the second, is unlimited and universal. The exercise of the office, in the type and antitype, is similar; but the nature of it is different. Christ teaches spiritual, immortal doc-

trine, for the information and salvation of the soul. Here, Christ as a prophet far exceeds Moses. In this view he is Moses' instructor and Saviour. The legislator, mediator, and deliverer of Jews, stands upon the same ground for acceptance with God, and eternal salvation, as any other person who could receive instructions from him as a prophet. The pardon of sins, and justification before God, were not in the power of Moses. But this power had Jesus Christ. All power in heaven, and in earth, is given into his hands. Moses came into the world in the way of all other men, in sin and iniquity. But Christ in a supernatural way, not liable to the imputation* of Adam's transgression, nor with any evil dispositions.

* It is certain Christ could not have suffered in any sense, much less unto death, but by the imputation of sin; but there is this difference between the imputation of sin to him, and the offspring of Adam: it was a voluntary act in him, to which he was under no necessity of submitting, any further than it was his own good-will and pleasure, for the honour of God, and the salvation of mankind; which necessity we have fully illustrated in part I.

As the seed of the woman, he was not liable to the imputation of Adam's transgression; because the sin which brings death, is reckoned from Adam and imputed to all his seed, male and female. But the blessed virgin was so sanctified and prepared by the Holy Ghost, that the holy Child born of her, out of the common way of generation, could not be liable to the guilt of breaking the covenant, by eating the forbidden fruit; and this sin could not be imputed to him personally, in law and justice, as it is to all Adam's seed. Here, then, is the grand difference between the holy child Jesus, and all other children,

The servant, though of the first eminence in point of qualifications, office, and usefulness, stood in need of the Master's mercy for eternal life, as much as the meanest fellow creature. But the Son of God, when he came into the world, in the form of a servant, stood in need of no mercy; he voluntarily humbled himself to our infirmities and mise-

that he came into our world without sin, either imputed or inherent, and they are born with both. But in his incarnation he submits to the imputation of both; i. e. of Adam's transgression, which is the cause of death, and the guilt of the actual sins of his offspring, which is the cause of their misery. Accordingly, being a person conceived and born without sin, in any sense of the word, we never hear of any sickness, or bodily affliction, by which he was indisposed in the whole course of his nativity. His sorrows and griefs arose from the sympathy of his pure and sacred humanity, with those who laboured under so many diseases and infirmities: and from the certainty of those most heavy sufferings which he should endure, both in soul and body, when the sins of the whole world, to be redeemed by him, were imputed to, and charged upon him by the broken law, and the righteous will of his Father, being the substitute and surety of the real transgressor.

The formation of our Saviour's human nature, was the effect of miraculous, supernatural, creating power; therefore he was no more liable to Adam's sin, as being a man, than a world of men would be, should God create them out of nothing, or out of the dust of the ground by a mediate creation, which would be no more miraculous, or supernatural, than it was to form the human nature of Christ in the womb of a virgin. Now, as persons, so formed, would not be concerned in Adam's sin, or fall, whatever similitude there might be of nature; even so our Saviour was not concerned therein. Dr. Ridgley's Body of Divinity, p. 201, third edit. Glas.

ries, that he might exercise mercy in its fullest extent, to the fallen, wretched race of Adam. Here we find him gloriously superior to all that ever came before him, or that bore office in the church of God; on this account he was worthy of being prophecied of by Moses and the prophets; and to be made known to all generations, from the first day of transgression, to the day of his incarnation; and thenceforward to be preached to all nations for the obedience of faith.

How fully these predictions of Moses applied to Jesus Christ; and how zealously his apostles preached to the Jews, that he was that prophet, we need not here enlarge on.

As an improvement of the whole, we may look back, and gather up some practical observations, for the encouragement of piety, from these important prophecies. And,

1. Our supreme love, and most grateful affections are due to him, who has manifested his mercy so wonderfully to us. The infinitely merciful Creator, hath not only foretold things that shall come to pass, but these things are of the most blessed and happy consequences to us. View and contemplate our first parents; guilty before their judge; what confusion, fear, and anguish must they feel in their minds! Minds perfectly free, hitherto, from any such perturbation. But such is the state of every self-convicted soul: and which of their children, numerous and multiplied as they

are, have not experienced something of the same kind?

But here is love and mercy expressed to the trembling pair, in the promise of a Saviour to be born of the woman; a divine offspring, whose authority and influence should grow and reign, from the beginning to the end of time. The revelation of this, was a matter of faith to them, and succeeding generations; and by virtue of it, holy men in the first ages walked with God. And it is thought, by many divines, that the promised seed often walked with them in a human form. If so, he was then the object of their sense, as well as of their faith. Their love, obedience, and piety, are recorded, for the instruction and comfort of all ages, whether prior, or posterior to the nativity of the promised seed.

2. The object of our religious worship, being here set before us, let us worship the Lord our Maker, and contemplate the blessings, with which he comes to bless the Father of the faithful and all the families of the earth. It may well be expected, that when a person of such supereminent excellence comes, many extraordinary benefits will follow; the author of life; the fountain of mercy; the God of all grace; he who hath all fulness and riches in himself, will certainly bestow the *blessings* which he well knows are necessary, and are expected of him in those regions of distress, which he condescends to visit. When the Creator de-

scends from the throne of glory, and vouchsafes to take notice of the objects of woe which inhabit his footstool: the expectations of these objects cannot be too great, and more especially when he sends a particular promise, that he will bless them with his presence, and supply all their wants. Abraham may well rejoice to see his day, though it be afar off; the joyful day of his Redeemer's incarnation he was as certain would come, as it was certain he had his long promised Isaac, and that at a time when the course of nature, and many circumstances in providence, forbid his birth. Nothing is impossible with God. All the blessings connected with the blessing of Abraham, shall most certainly be made good to the believing, tried, afflicted, praying soul. The Lord God will give grace and glory.

3. That prophet, of whom Moses and all other prophets spoke, is certainly come; let us hear him. He only hath the words of eternal life. He is sent to rule and to govern the nations; the sceptre of his kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness; he does all things right for God and for man; he rectifies the disorders of nature by restraing iniquity; and of the soul, by healing all its diseases; he is that prophet in whom is light and perfection; Moses lays down his authority before him; and although the meekest of men, must learn of him who is meek and lowly in heart.

The purity of his doctrine will bear the strictest

investigation; it is not defiled with human inventions or traditions; it is heavenly, spiritual, and immortal; it promotes the glory of the supreme God, and the true interests of mankind; it is therefore worthy of all acceptation. All the enemies of divine Revelation have sifted and tried it throughout, but have never found any flaw that could render it unworthy of public esteem; their attempts to expose it have always recoiled upon themselves; and that divine truth, which the Gopel contains, they have rendered more conspicuous and firm by their opposition to it.

DISCOURSE II.

The Offspring of David and the Virgin's Son.

It is highly proper that the Son of God should both be prophesied of and represented, in a clear and expressive manner. Prophecies inform us who he is, what he is, and what he shall do: types or representations of him, show us, as through a glass, his divine person, though yet afar off. By the first, we hear; by the second, we see him: these, therefore, give all the assistance which faith can desire: the faith of the incarnate Saviour cometh by hearing the holy prophets; and is nourished and brought to the highest maturity, by seeing him in the types: persons, places, and things,

variously and often illustriously represented him; and the blessed Saviour himself hath so taught us to consider them, saying, "A wiser than Solomon, a greater than Jonas, is here: as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: I am the true bread which came down from heaven," &c.

The holy prophets were representatives of the Son of God before his incarnation, as the holy apostles were after it; some of them were eminent types of him in more particulars than others. The office in general represented him as a prophet, who should reveal the will of God, and the duty of men, more fully and clearly; therefore they all spoke of him that was to come, whose doctrine and instructions should comparatively darken theirs, as the light of the sun absorbs that of the stars.

We have heard Moses saying, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you like unto me; we have also seen some parts of the resemblance between this most eminent servant and the Son of God. But these words, *like unto me*, intimate that this prophet knew himself to be an illustrious type, or figure of him that was to come. Hence the church both heard and saw in Moses the great Redeemer of their souls. The next most distinguished type we meet with, is David; who prefigured him in a two-fold capacity: first, as a visible head of the church, who governed the people by his divine law: and, secondly, as a prophet,

who spoke more fully of the person of Christ than any that had spoken before him.

We propose considering his prophecies in the first part of this discourse; and in the second, those of the evangelical Isaiah; joining these two together, because from them we have the fullest display of the great subject before us. They point out the PERSON, and the whole scene of the nativity of the Son of God so clearly, that the apostles were at no loss for an application of their predictions to their divine Master. In him they saw the offspring of David—the child born—the Son given, Isa. ix. 6.

THE OFFSPRING OF DAVID.

First. David was an eminent type of Christ, as well as a prophet; God raised him up to represent his Son, in his regal capacity chiefly; and he had many revelations of him whom he represented. It is hard to say whether he was more illustrious in his prophetical or typical capacity; his name, as well as his person and actions, is considerable here; it signifies well-beloved; so the Father declares of the Son, saying, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. It is a name too, by which he is promised to the church in other prophecies; but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king.

The place of the birth of the type and antitype was the same Bethlehem of Judah. The Son of Jesse, was an eminent emblem of the Son of God in his person; the first was ruddy, and withall of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to; skilful, prudent, and valiant. The second, altogether lovely, the fairest among ten thousand; growing in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. Notwithstanding, they were both despised and rejected of their brethren, and were equally opposed in their pretensions.

The actions and the sufferings of David are beautiful and noble illustrations of those of Jesus Christ, they both rose from small beginnings to the highest eminence of character. David had four of the most cruel, fierce, and powerful antagonists to contend with, either of which was too much for a feeble individual, unassisted by Omnipotence; but the intripid youth having full confidence in divine aid, courageously attacked the lion and the bear, in defence of his Father's flock committed to his care. He slew the blaspheming monster Goliah, and cut off his head with his own sword; and by flying before the tyrant Saul, he overcame his persecutions, and was raised to the throne of Israel. So the incarnate Son of God had the devil, that roaring lion; sin, that devouring evil; death, that monster of terror to all living; and a tyrannical persecuting world, to contend with and subdue, John xvi. 33.

We observe this difference between the type and the antitype; the first respects things temporal, confined to one small part of the earth only; the second is spiritual, and extends to the whole world, the immortal concerns of the soul, and its eternal state. But we are to attend to the prophecies, which this holy man hath given us respecting his Son and Lord. He had received repeated assurrances from heaven, that he should never want a Son to succeed him, and sit upon his throne. Hence all his successors were types of that Son, who should enjoy his throne for ever without a successor. This Son he knew was to be the promised seed of the woman; the blessing of Abraham; the sent prophet, like unto Moses. He denominates him by another name, to which none of his family, who should succeed him, to the time of his coming, had any just claim. The character, by which he is distinguished is emphatical—it is the MESSIAH, a name of the same signification as CHRIST; that is, anointed*. To arrange the prophecies of the king of Israel, concerning this Son, the Messiah, we shall bring forward those which relate to his birth—life—death—resurrection—ascension—and glory: in all which respects the spirit of Christ, which was in him, did testify concerning him.

* These three words, in signification, are all one, Messiah, Christ, Anointed; saith Edward Leigh, Esq. Crit. Sac. in verb. Mashah, p. 136.

David is the first who holds forth the Redeemer of the world by this character. It intimates, that fulness of grace and truth, with which he was enriched for the salvation of fallen and miserable sinners. Being in the highest sense the anointed of the Lord, he was fitted for the highest offices, and was well qualified to perform the best services to lost and wretched men. He was furnished with authority and answerable gifts, to do the work of a mediator.

It is in the divine hymns, which the sweet psalmist in Israel composed on various occasions, that we meet with his prophecies of the Messiah. These Haggiographa, like an extensive field, contain the precious memorials of this blessed person, whose advent is so necessary. If these be scattered up and down in various parts of it, it is our business to gather them up, and place them together in one point of view. Some of these songs are professedly on his nativity, and speak of his birth in very explicit terms.

In the fortieth psalm, we read, "Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me;" in the book of thy eternal counsels it is appointed that I should assume human nature. It is recorded in the book of thy law, and the Scriptures cannot be broken. I come to do thy will, to be born of a woman, to supercede all sacrifices which cannot take away sin. "A body hast thou prepared me," which shall be a proper sacrifice of sufficient efficacy to

take away the sins of the soul. For this purpose "Thou art he, O my God, that took me out of the womb. Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breast. I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou art my God from my mother's belly: by thee have I been holden up from the womb; thou art he that took me out of my my mother's bowels." These words are certainly spoken in the name and person of the Messiah. They manifestly point to Christ, and must necessarily be understood of him, and of him only, as is evident from many Scriptures of the New Testament, Luke xxiv. 27. John v. 46, &c.

The life of this divine Person is largely delineated in these holy writings, both in his private and public character. The forty-fifth psalm holds him out in both of these: it describes the grace of his private life, and his majesty in public. "Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips." "And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the spirit by measure unto him." His conversation was, therefore, fragrant, and of a sweet smelling savour: "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia; because of the savour of thy

good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth;" "And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers."

When he enters upon his public work, he comes forth with might, and glory, and majesty; with the sword of truth, and the arrows of pointed doctrine, which should reach the hearts of his enemies, and compel them to submit to his government. He came to receive a kingdom of a far higher nature than David's; and David seems to lose sight of his own little temporal state, when he contemplates the eternal, universal, unchangeable kingdom of the incarnate God:" "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre."

The eighty-ninth psalm carries on this description; particularly from the 18th. to the 38th. verse. The seventy-second psalm throughout, and a part of the hundred and eighteenth psalm, celebrate the prosperity, the vigour, and purity of his government. He is the holy One of Israel our king; who only knoweth the will of his Father, and is able to reveal it, and can save the souls of sinners by the means of that revelation. He is the chosen and exalted one, ordained and called to this office; the first born, the only begotten; appointed before the world began: revealed from the foundation of the world, and manifested through all the ages and generations of it; to be the only fit and worthy person, to execute all the purposes

of divine mercy and love to miserable creatures. He is typified by the man, who is by eminence said to be, after his own heart, raised up of purpose by divine Providence to this very service. David was instructed more fully than any that ever came before him, into the nature, and extent, of that government which he should exercise; he knew it was to be a spiritual kingdom, to extend to the ends of the earth; to endure for ever. His throne should be as firmly established as the sun and moon in the heavens; his horn, or power, should be exalted when these were rolled together as a scroll.

Whilst our royal prophet delineates so fully, the person and government of the king Messiah, he also describes with equal plainness, the opposition and persecutions which he should suffer, and to what lengths these would be carried by his enemies. The second psalm is an undeniable prediction of his persecutions from kings, and rulers, and people. They opposed his doctrine, and insulted his person, with a tumultuous rage; they would not have this man to reign over them, notwithstanding he gave them the fullest evidence that he was the Lord's anointed; and that from the nature of his precepts, which were most pure, holy, and beneficial to mankind, they should certainly prevail; and that he was every way qualified to reign over the whole earth. Though these consulted together, and set their wisdom and strength against him, nevertheless he should be exalted and estab-

lished in his kingdom, according to the decree by which he was appointed to be king in Zion. The hundred and eighteenth psalm foretels this in these words, " The stone which the builders refused, is become the head stone of the corner." He should be set aside by the heads and rulers of the synagogue, as the builders of a palace would roll a stone out of their way of which they made no account; but by the marvellous providence of the master builder, that rejected stone should become the principal ornament of their edifice. He should be the foundation of a new and spiritual temple, notwithstanding all their oppositions, as certainly as he was the greatest glory of the old. Incidents, seemingly trivial in themselves, are divinely grand when they have respect to this divine person. Our holy prophet is shown, by the spirit of prophecy, that the Son of God should be pointed out by the rejoicings of little children, on his public entry into the holy city, and that this should increase the indignation of his enemies. See psalm the eighth. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger, Matt. xxi. 16.

These enemies began at this time to carry on their persecutions to the uttermost, till they terminated in the cutting off the Messiah. This is particularly foretold, and the minute circumstances of it related by this same holy man. The twenty-

second psalm shows us his sufferings most distinctly; and gives us the very words which he should express in death. The holy psalmist sees the person of his son, and Saviour, suffering unspeakable agonies. He describes the manner of his death; which is by piercing his hands and feet in his crucifixion: a mode of punishment not known of till many ages after these predictions were delivered. The whole scene is so minutely described, that never did a painting answer to an original with greater exactness. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture, Matt. xxvii. 35.

The sixty-ninth psalm points out, with remarkable precision, the indignities offered to the suffering Prince of Life: "They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." These words have no meaning, but as they are applied to Jesus Christ; and that they are prophetic of him *only*, is most certain. "They gave him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall; and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. Possibly this was done as soon as he came to Golgotha; before they laid him down on his cross to pierce his hands and his feet. But in the very agonies of death, upwards of three hours after, when he cried, with a loud voice, ELI, ELI; MY GOD, MY GOD; one of them ran and took a spunge and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed and gave him to drink. Jesus, when he had cried again, with

a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. Matth. xxvii. 50.

These psalms contain the whole transactions of the passion-week; when the Son of God was betrayed into the hands of men. The traitor is also particularly pointed out, both by type and prophecy, "Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." As Ahithophel betrayed David, so did Judas Iscariot his Lord and Master; and both became their own executioners for these their treasonable actions. How wonderful is it, that this one person should be so minutely described in his character, life, and death, so many ages before! That the crucified body of our blessed Lord was buried, and rose again from the dead, is foretold in the sixteenth psalm; these words clearly refer to this: "My flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." These are his words of whom it is testified that it was not possible that he should be holden of death. The impossibility of his being held, or detained a prisoner by death, appears most fully in that he is the author of existence, and life, to every living creature. He had power to lay down his life, and to take it again; it was his own act and deed to be obedient unto death, that is, he

was obedient to his Father's will, and the demands of the law, which threatened sin with death. He took the sin which deserved death upon him, and died; by this he cancelled sin and disarmed, or broke the sting, and removed the terrors of it; and as his soul rose out of pain and sorrow, when he bowed his head and gave up the ghost; so, his body should soon rise out of that place, where corruption or rottenness reigns, without being in the least tinctured with it; mortification should not reach any member of it, and its resurrection from the dead should loudly declare, that he was, and should never cease to be, the only begotten Son of God; according to the spirit of holiness which ever was, and ever should remain in him.

The holy and inspired king of Israel, is yet further illuminated into the mystery of this great subject; and he consequently foretels the ascension of the Son of God. We have his majestic description of this in two places, viz. the twenty-fourth and the sixty-eighth psalms. In both places we have the triumphs of victory. In the first a demand made at the gates of heaven, for admission to the returning King of glory, who had been abroad in the wars—"Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty; the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the

King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? the Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory." In the second, we read—"The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

These magnificent scriptures are a poetic description of his ascension, who came down from heaven. "Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things," Eph. iv. 9, 10.

Our royal instructor can but give us one view more of the conquering Messiah; and that is, the glory to which he is exalted. He sees him set down on the right-hand of his Father, crowned with an eternal weight of glory. The hundred and tenth psalm describes this: "The Lord said unto to my Lord, sit thou on my right-hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool: the Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion." Here we have the incarnate Lord of David, seated in his royal authority; head over all things, to reign in righteousness for ever. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness; from the womb of the morning thou

hast the dew of thy youth ;" is a description of his prophetic office; by the exercise and effect of which, all his people shall be beautified with holiness, and they shall be numerous as the dew drops on the grass tops, in a prolific morning of the spring. "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent. Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek." This is the third office with which he is invested in his state of glory: it is an unchanging priesthood; indispensably necessary for the protection, consolation, and glorification of his weak, fearful, and afflicted members.

There are many apposite passages in these sacred songs, which might well admit of an application to these prophecies, by way of illustration; but our limits are too narrow to admit of their being brought forward; and we mean only to exhibit those which are direct to the subject.

Thus holy David, the man after God's own heart, the greatest king that ever sat on the throne of Zion, most sweetly sings of, and distnctly points out the incarnation, life, and death of the Redeemer of the world. He sees the Son of God in his own offspring, and rejoices in the prospect of his birth, above a thousand years before that event took place. Let us now attend to the next most eminent prophet, as proposed.

Secondly. The evangelical Isaiah. He stands next in rank as a prophet, as to the extent and sublimity of the prophecies concerning the Mes-

siah; David's revelations of future events were very limited, respecting nations and the revolutions of kingdoms and states. Here, he was inferior to Isaiah, who was by office a prophet. David was by office a king, and the only king who ever was so highly favoured with prophetic visions. These, too, were chiefly of the King of glory, whom he represented. But this royal prophet had visions concerning Judah and Jerusalem; Samaria, Egypt, Tyre, Babylon, Persia, Arabia, Ethiopia, &c. &c. He was a prophet to the nations, as well as to the church of God: and hence his prophecies consist of two parts; the first, describing the judgments of God against the enemies of his people, intermixed with some encouraging promises for their support; the second, which begins about the fortieth chapter, respects the Saviour, his incarnation, and its happy consequences.

This holy prophet was a descendant of king David; his father Amos is said to be brother to Uzziah the king, who was the eleventh from David. He preached through the three succeeding reigns, of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah*, unto

* Jotham was the twelfth from David, and reigned sixteen years, after the long reign of Uzziah; Ahaz sixteen; Hezekiah twenty-nine; in all sixty-one. If he began his ministry in the last year of Uzziah, and finished it in the first year of Manasseh, he must be sixty-two years in the office; as we have said before. Calvin says he prophesied sixty-four, or upwards; but of this there is no certainty. Preface to the Comment on Isaiah.

Nor is there any more certainty of his cruel death, but the

the accession of wicked and bloody Manasseh, who is said, by the Jews, to have married his daughter; and they further say, notwithstanding this alliance, that he put the faithful, aged servant of God to a cruel death. But,

It is the discoveries he hath given us of the Son of God we are now to attend to. In his prophecies we have many clear revelations, which illustrate and add strength to what we have heard. We are going to converse with the prince of the prophets, who shines with more eminent majesty than any that followed him to the time of the incarnation. Seven hundred years before this happy era commenced, he foretold that the Messiah should be the virgin's son; the family he should descend from; the names and characters he should sustain; the forerunner who should precede his coming; his commission to preach, and his qualifications for the office: the effect of his ministry with Jews and Gentiles; the extremity of his sufferings, and

report of the Jews; unless the manner of it be alluded to by the apostle, when he tells the Hebrews, that some of their prophets were sawn asunder; which many commentators believe was the case with this aged, and Gospel prophet. The cruel and bloody character of Manasseh, lays too good a foundation to believe the report: for, most certainly, the eminent servant of God, and aged father in the church, would not quietly see his own son in law insulting the divine authority, trampling on the sacred institutions of Moses, and filling the streets of Jerusalem with innocent blood, without remonstrating against such crimes; which might be the occasion of bringing his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

the cruelty of his death. The spirit of prophecy raises up in him, the perhaps too much neglected prophecies of David, with enlargements and illustrations, for the illumination of the church and all succeeding prophets.

"He prophesieth," saith a good author, "of the birth of Christ Jesus, as if he had been taught by the angel Gabriel, who brought the annunciation and message of it to the blessed virgin his mother. Of his passion and death he spake, as if with the apostle John he had stood by, when he was crucified. His resurrection he describeth, as if, with all the apostles, he had stood upon Mount Olivet, where the Lord took the cloud of glory as his heavenly chariot to ascend and go up to his Father."

THE VIRGIN'S SON.

The Messiah shall be born of a virgin, is undeniably manifest in these words of this prophet, in the seventh chapter of his book: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel." As soon as Isaiah is confirmed in his office, of which he gives an account in the preceding chapter, he is taught this great mystery of godliness. He, doubtless, had learned something of it in general, from the revelations made to David; but here he has further light into the subject, and speaks of the woman, whose seed should bruise the serpent's head, and be the blessing of all nations. It is, you observe, in the royal

presence he delivers this prophecy; to assure the king, trembling with the fear of a coalition of his enemies, that the house of David shall never be overthrown, till this most glorious event took place. Emmanuel must be born, before the throne of David can be overturned. It was set up for him, and it shall stand till he comes whose right it is, Ezek. xxi. 27.

He describes the family, as well as the person, from whom Emmanuel should arise. The family was ancient and honourable in Israel. In the beginning of the eleventh chapter, he foretels—"There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow up out of his roots; and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him." This rod and branch means the Messiah, who should certainly come of the same family as David; although it was cut down, and in very low circumstances, like a tree whose roots only remained in the earth; although it had neither body, branches, nor fruit, nothing that could distinguish it but the stem, which was also withering and rotting away; yet a rod, and that a very small one, should grow out of this stem, and it shall become a branch; it shall grow and become a tree bearing fruit. He shall raise the honours and dignity of his family. He shall be the glory of it, in a far higher sense than David. He shall become the root of Jesse, by restoring and building up his house, on a divine and spiritual foundation; to which the Gentiles

shall seek as well as the Jews. "For he shall grow up before the Lord, as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground.

He particularizes the names and characters by which the Messiah should be distinguished; he celebrates both his qualifications and his government. See his ninth chapter: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. Of the increase of his government, and peace, there shall be no end; upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment, and with justice, from henceforth even for ever." The child born, and the son given is the same person, and can be no other than the only begotten Son of God; "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father."

His name, expressive of his nature, and by no means suitable to any mere creature, in whatever office or capacity it may stand, consists of such divine characters as belong only to God. Amazement may well fill our prostrate and adoring minds, when we see the eternal Author of all, in whom we exist, becoming a child; a man child; a son; a virgin's son: passing through the various changes and dangers of childhood, growing into manhood,

improving in qualifications fit for universal government, and to endless duration. This wonderful person possesses in himself divinity and humanity; he is the only wise God; the Almighty; worthy of being the Father, or Author*, of eternal ages of glory to his kindred; the Author of peace between the Creator and guilty creatures.

This child is born to rule; this Son comes to reign; his government, and the blessings of it shall increase for ever. He shall change the nature of David's throne, and make it a seat of spiritual judgment; his kingdom is not of this world.

As soon as he is fit for public services in the church, he receives a commission to preach. We see this in the beginning of the sixty-first chapter: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek. He hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." The Lord God sent him to give liberty and life, because he was qualified to execute the will of his Father, respecting such miserable objects, and to communicate unto them all the blessings of divine goodness and mercy.

This prophet particularly dwells on this subject. He has many decriptions of it, and more frequent allusions to it than any other. The first part of the eleventh chapter contains a large and beautiful

* Vide Calvin in loc.

description of the qualifications which entitled the rod and branch of Jesse to receive the commission on which he acted. See another in the forty-first chapter, where every encouragement is given him to enter upon and fulfil his commission. Though the work was great, and far above human strength, it was not above Omnipotence; therefore he says, fear not to attack the idols which carpenters and gold-smiths had formed, or the idolatry of which they have been the occasion. In almost every following chapter, we meet with descriptions of the commissioned Saviour; see chapters forty-second and forty-ninth: in both which the Gentiles are included with the Jews.

We proceed to take notice of his other prophecies concerning his ministry, miracles, and sufferings. These are no less explicit, and more largely set forth, than the preceding.

The mighty God sends his herald to prepare his way; to proclaim his advent; and to call his people to make ready for his approach. He foretels this circumstance in language suitable to the dignity of it, in these words, in the fortieth chapter, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make strait in the desart an high way for our God." That these words are spoken of John the Baptist needs no illustration here; we, therefore, pass on to those which respect his ministry.

This is particularly stated in the beginning of

the fifty-third chapter. "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from him: he was despised, and we esteemed him not." The report here is the doctrine which the Messiah taught, in the power and effects of which the arm of the Lord was revealed: when he published peace and brought good tidings, reports, or declarations of salvation, through the infinite mercy and goodness of God. His life and conduct were eminently beautiful. The beauty of holiness shone clearly in every step of his feet. Our holy prophet puts the question by way of admiration; how beautiful! All the perfections of divine and moral excellence shone in him, with the highest lustre and beauty. He travelled over the mountains of Judea, and went from place to place doing good.

Notwithstanding, the success of his ministry was not what might have been expected. He was mean as a tender plant; no greatness, as to this world, attending him; nothing attracting or engaging in his appearance; no companions but a few poor ignorant men, who were, in the opinion of the rulers, the scum of the earth; therefore they

despised, rejected, and persecuted him. He complains of this treatment in the forty-ninth chapter, saying, "I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain. But though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength." It is in relation to his ministry, that he is so often spoken of as a light to lighten the Gentiles.

We might here enlarge greatly, and bring forward many prophecies in illustration; but our limits will not admit of it: one thing more, however, we may observe, and that is, the effect of his ministry on Jews and Gentiles. He was a sanctuary to some, although he was a stumbling-block, and a rock of offence to his nation in general: "And a man shall be an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of waters in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Lift up thine eyes round about and see: all they gather themselves together they come to thee: thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughter shall be nursed at thy side, because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, and the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee! We might fill a treatise with questions out of this book on this head, but we pass on to the miracles, which were also the subjects of prophecy.

"And in that day shall the deaf hear the words

of this book; and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord; and the poor among men shall rejoice in the holy one of Israel. And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim; and the ears of them that hear shall hearken; and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly: strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees; say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not; behold your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing."

These are miracles of mercy foretold of the Son of God, and which should eminently distinguish him from all other characters; and therefore this prophet points out his incarnation, by the frequent repetition of that day; in that day; refering, particularly, to the time of his nativity, and the happy consequences that should follow it.

The sufferings and death of the Messiah are very clearly foretold by this sublime prophet; not only in the passages before referred to, which respect his life and ministry; but in such as particularly mark him, in contradistinction to all other sufferers. The obedient Saviour submits to all his Father's will; neither does he turn away from the

scene of sorrows, which opened upon him; but the prophet, speaking in his person (a mode of speech peculiar to prophecy, and very common with Isaiah), says, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Can this be the Messiah—the promised Saviour to a lost and miserable world? Yes; he came to suffer disgrace, pain, and death: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?" His being man would have been of no benefit to the suffering humanity, if he had not also been a sufferer; his appearance and example before his enslaved, trembling, and perishing creatures, could have done them no good; but he is bound, that they may be liberated; he is disgraced, that they may be honoured; and he suffers, that they may be comforted. But all this is fully stated in the fifty-third chapter, which opens to us the cause, the extent, and the effects of his sufferings. Let us look it over, and observe them. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." Our griefs, our sorrows, were certainly laid on him; our sins being imputed to him by his own consent, he bore and carried them as our substitute; it was, therefore just in God to afflict him in our stead, though we did not know, or consider, this as the reason, but esteemed it right, that God should punish him as a blasphemer. But

"He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." Our transgressions were the cause of his wounds; our iniquities, of his bruises; he was chastised for us, or in our stead; that he might procure peace for us; our sins were the cause of his sorrows, and these the cause of our pardon: his stripes are the occasion and reason of our health.

"All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." As sheep are of a wandering disposition, and have no foresight, or consideration in any thing, and no ability to extricate themselves from danger, when attacked in the ways of their own choosing; such a part have all the human race acted. But the Lord in mercy hath prevented our total ruin by sin, in sending his only begotten Son, in the likenes of sinful flesh, upon whose sacred person he could lay all our iniquities, by imputing or charging them upon him. Hence

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." Oppression and affliction of every kind and degree follow sin; he being the sinner's substitute, was silent under the righteous demands of justice; the Lamb of God struggled not to be released from the

bonds of obligation under which he lay, to pay the debt of punishment, which the law required, for past transgressions; he submitted to the severity of his enraged and malicious persecutors, when he was slain, to atone for the sins of the world; when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not. And

"He was taken from prison, and from judgment, and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the trasgression of my people was he stricken." He was taken prisoner by a band of soldiers, and conducted to the high priest's palace; and from thence to the Roman governor's judgment hall; he was sent to Herod of Galilee for sentence of death, and to Pilate again uncondemned. How ignominiously was he treated by a generation of abandoned wretches, whose wanton cruelties cannot be described! The wickedness of the generation in which he lived was so great, that, in the the nature of things, a person of so glorious, so holy, so good, so wise, so great a character, could not subsist in it; by wicked hands they put him to death, being perfectly ignorant of the great work they were engaged in, and of the greater personage, they were now making wanton sport of; it was not upon his own, but upon the account of others, viz. the people of God, that he was disgraced, buffeted, spit upon, ridiculed as a king, and his tormenting mock crown of thorns, made

to pierce deeper into his sacred temples by a stroke of a cane, Matt. xxvii. 30.

"And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, because he had done no violence, neither was deceit found in his mouth." When he was cut off out of the land of the living, a rich counsellor of Arimathea, laid his precious remains, in a splendid manner, in his own new tomb; the riches of the wicked are displayed in their funerals; nor was it lessening to the heavenly character of the meek and lowly Lamb of God, that his grave was a sumptuous one; like the wicked, and the rich in the earth. Riches were sanctified in the hands of this great and good man; and he here applies them to the most excellent use. Divine providence is exceeding remarkable here, and the prophecy equally so. The undertaker in this momentous funeral well knew the character of this righteous Person; and it is more than probable, both saw and conversed with him after he was risen from the dead.

One passage more may yet be brought forward, and with it we shall finish. It is a description of his glorious victory over all his enemies, and may well be prophetic of his resurrection, and his triumphant return to heaven. It is the first part of the sixty-third chapter. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with died garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in

the greatness of his strength?" This is a question proposed by spectators, whether in the church on earth, or in heaven. To which he answers, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." These again ask; "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat." He answers, "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me, for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled on my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come."

DISCOURSE III.

The Predictions of the other Prophets.

THE incarnation of the Son of God was the principal subject in the ministry of all the prophets. They inquired, and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come. The spirit of Christ, which was in them, kept this subject constantly in view, 1 Peter i. 10—12; all the other parts of their ministry were of little importance without this. The Messiah was the soul and substance of their prophecies; their business was to preach him to the people, to inform

them of the dignity of his person; the necessity of his advent; the certainty that it should come to pass; and the universal benefit it would be to mankind.

Those divine seers, with whom we are about to converse on this great subject, had each some revelation concerning it; they, therefore, speak what they had heard and seen of the Redeemer of the world, in that sublime, but plain, language, which is suitable to his glorious Majesty, and the instruction of mankind. Each of them gives us a dignified character of him; which implies the offices he sustains, and the benefits which arise from them to his people. The first in order is Jeremiah, who describes him as a justifier: Ezekiel, a defender: Daniel, a prince: Hosea, a king: Joel, Jehovah: Micah, a ruler: Haggai, the desire of nations: Zechariah, the branch, the fountain: Malachi, the messenger. A brief illustration of each of these in the first place, and practical reflexions on the prophecies in general in the second, shall constitute the present discourse.

1. Jeremiah foretels, that the Son of God shall come to justify, or to make righteous, and therefore he may well be described as a justifier. His words are, "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise up unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall

dwell safely; and this is the name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, or justifier. The prophet calls the attention of the church to this important subject by the word Behold; it imports the greatness of the matter pointed out, and very frequently stands first in the predictions of the Messiah: the days come, when the righteous branch shall be raised up unto David, specifies the time, which was drawing on, when that king promised shall arise to reign and execute judgment on the earth. Under his government Judah and Israel, the people of God, shall enjoy tranquillity and peace. But the blessings of his reign were not to be confined to Israel after the flesh, who indeed should enjoy the benefits of his personal ministry: but Israelites indeed, who were without guile in every nation under heaven, should be saved, and dwell safely. These should distinguish him by a name arising from the nature and exercise of his office, the LORD, who is righteousness itself, and only can justify the ungodly, shall cover them with a robe of righteousness, and they shall make their boast of him, as the Lord their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. In about nine or ten years after, the same promise is repeated by the same person. "In those days, and at that time, will I cause the *branch of righteousness* to grow up unto David, and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days, Judah shall

be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely, under the protection of the Lord her righteousness.

Ezekiel is the next who makes mention of him. He was some time co-temporary with Jeremiah; being carried to Babylon in his youth, he was appointed to preach in the captivity. He zealously declared the judgments of God against his idolatrous people; and, as the pious Henry observes, by opening the terrors of the Lord, he prepares Christ's way. He speaks of the Messiah very distinctly in these words: "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd: and I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them: I the Lord have spoken it. And they shall be no more a prey to the heathen; neither shall the beasts of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid. And I will raise up for them a plant of renown, and they shall no more be consumed with hunger, &c. chap. xxxiv.

The blessed Saviour, throughout the whole chapter, is spoken of in contrast with the wicked and careless rulers of his people, through whose neglect they were sufferers in captivity; but in due time the promised Messiah should come, who shall feed and defend them as a good shepherd. David's antitype should fill his throne, and reign with renown, with the highest fame for all excel-

lencies. Though but a weak and feeble plant in the eyes of men, yet he shall be of higher renown than the heads of the thousands of Israel. He is a righteous branch, that is beautiful and glorious; he has a name above every name; a throne above every throne; and in all this glory there is a defence against the devouring beasts of the land. They had been thrust away with side and with shoulder, as if they had been no better than intruders; they had been pushed away with the horns of unhallowed authority from the enjoyment of their sacred privileges, and were scattered as if there had been no shepherd; therefore the chief shepherd says, "I will save my flock; I will make them dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods."

That the prophetic descriptions of this chapter belong to the person and ministry of the incarnate Son of God, is clearly seen in the applications of them by himself, in the history of his life, written by the disciple John, chap. x. We shall therefore turn to

Daniel. This eminent statesman, some time also co-temporary with Ezekiel, has the largest views, and the clearest visions, of the incarnation of any that followed him; he marks the promised Redeemer of men with the character of the MESSIAH THE PRINCE; and fixes the very time of his coming, which none of the former prophets had been instructed in. This was an event they all

knew, but of the time when, they had not heard. His prophecy concerning the promised Saviour, stands in the centre of a whole chain of prophecies; all which are connected with him; some relating to the times immediately preceding his appearance; and others, to events which should occur afterward; but the principal are such as belong to himself, and foretel what he should do, and what he should suffer. His words are; "Know therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment, to restore and build Jerusalem, unto the *Messiah the prince*, shall be seven weeks. And after three-score and two weeks, shall Messiah be cut off."

The number of seventy weeks, with which the passage begins, includes the whole period from the time of granting the commission to Ezra to the death of Christ; that is, four hundred and ninety years. This was transacted in the A. M. 3546, anno ante Christo 458; the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimus. This is the Ahasuerus, who married Esther, by whose influence, it is thought, this decree was obtained.

Such as wish to see a full illustration of these weeks, may find much satisfaction in Prideaux's Connexion of the History of the Old and New Testament, part I. book 5.; and Mr. Orton's discourse of Daniel's Weeks, or a Prophesy of the Messiah's Appearance; also Disputations between a Protestant and a Jew, in loc. p. 39—45.

The prince of life is so distinctly foretold by this man of God, as to the time of his birth, the blessed effects of his life, and the manner and consequences of his death, that nothing can be plainer, or more certain. The expectation of the Jews, about the end of this period, was so great, that they flocked to the standard of any noted pretender, and multitudes of them lost their lives in following false Messiahs. Josephus, their own historian, assigns this as the great cause of that obstinate resistance with which they withstood the Romans in their wars. He says they expected every day, that the true and promised Messiah would come and deliver them; their Talmud tells us, they expected him hourly, Josephus Pell. Jud. lib. 7.

This great and wonderful prophecy was published to the church by Daniel five hundred and thirty-eight years before the incarnation, eighty years before the date of the seventy weeks begins. He saw fully, not only the necessity and certainty, but the design of this most important event. "It was to finish transgression;" to restrain it, say many critics, to check or stop its progress; to finish its reign and tyranny; to destroy it. "To make an end of sin;" to cancel the guilt, and carry away the punishment of it; to seal up the curse that follows it; that when sought for, it may not be found; "And to make reconciliation for iniquity:" to satisfy the broken law and offended justice of God, by the sacrifice of himself; and

thus reconcile God and his creature; he makes a full atonement, and thereby effects a complete reconciliation, "And to bring in everlasting righteousness;" for the justification and glorification of all his redeemed, whose righteousness in him should be far more excellent in its nature than the best of a mere creature's; commensurate in duration to the immortal soul. "And to seal up the vision and prophecy;" especially those which had respect to his incarnation; these being accomplished in his birth, life, ministry, and death, resurrection, ascension, and glory; shall all be confirmed, and fully ratified, as with the broad seal of heaven; so that there should be no more prophetic vision of him, as hereafter, to come. "And to anoint the Most Holy:" the church, now in a distressed and afflicted state, appointed and called to the most holy services and enjoyments; but stood much in need of the anointing spirit of this most holy One, that to everlasting ages she might be most holy to the Lord, and be flourishing, joyful, and happy in him.

What is said in the seventh chapter of this book, of one like the Son of Man coming to the Ancient of Days, and receiving universal everlasting dominion, may be descriptive of his ascension, after he had finished the work for which he came into the world.

What Hosea had written of Christ does not seem to be of command, but of permission, as it

were occasionally; he leaves the evangelical province to his brother Isaiah, and records the displeasure of God against the sins of his people, pressing them earnestly to repentance and acceptance of his mercy; however he does not wholly omit the great source of felicity to sinful creatures; but speaks of the promised MESSIAH, under the well known character of David, their king, to whom they should return, after a very long captivity.

He intimates his going down to, and return from Egypt; and also, his resurrection on the third day, chap. vi. 2. No other prophet takes notice of the recall from Egypt; and we should not have known that the Messiah was intended, had not the Holy Spirit directed the evangelist to apply it to him, and thereby to point out, and ascertain, his incarnation. His resurrection on the third day, is said to be according to the Scripture, 1 Cor. xv. 4. And this is the only Scripture where the third day is named; it is therefore of equal certainty in the application of it to the life-giving Emmanuel, as the sign of Jonas, to the men who required it, Matt. xii. 40.

Joel speaks of the same event, and its happy consequences, when the Spirit proceeding from the Father, and the Son, shall be poured upon all flesh; because the LORD JEHOVAH hath come to Zion and Jerusalem. He hath come in the fulness of time, made of a woman, made under the law, to

deliver the souls of men from the curse they deserved, and from the tyranny of infernal spirits; he, therefore, pours out his Holy Spirit in plentiful effusion upon all flesh; Jews and Gentiles are made partakers of this blessing; they unite together in his name, and call upon him for salvation; they shall prophesy and praise him.

With Joel we may join the prophet Amos, who speaks of the same events, in much the same manner, in the last part of his book.

We come to the place where the blessed Messiah shall be born, and that is, *Bethlehem Ephratah*; a place that was but little among the thousands of Judah; it was small, with few inhabitants, and of little note; but it was noticed of the ruler of Israel, who shall come into his church through it. It was as a way but little frequented, and, therefore, the more suitable for his entrance into the world, who came not to be ministered to, nor with observation. This was foretold to be the place of his birth, almost as soon as it was revealed that he should be born of a virgin. Isaiah and Micah, prophesied much about the same time: the one describes the person and the family of whom he was to come; and the other the place where he was to be born. Daniel, we have heard, specifies the time when this should come to pass: all which put together, one would think none could miss of his advent. But Messiah came too meekly to be known; he was too low to be seen by the great

men of the world. "But he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God, for now he shall be great unto the ends of the earth; and this man shall be the peace." He shall be the peace-maker between God and man, and shall rule in the right of such reconciliation; and shall not only effect, but maintain it for ever.

It was of importance to point out unto the church, the place of the nativity of the Son of God; because if this circumstance had been wanting, it would have given greater occasion to pretenders, and false messiahs, who rose in such numbers about the time he was expected; as well as have afforded a strong ground of opposition to the enemies of Christianity, who are ready to take every advantage against a cause, so contrary to their corrupted inclinations. But when we find every thing so minutely foretold, concerning the Saviour of the world, so long before his incarnation, we ought narrowly to examine every pretender, and survey, with the utmost care, every feature and circumstance by which he is described, that we may not mistake the sacred person we ought to enquire for, and take up with something like him, instead of himself. The notes and marks of him are so many, and so clearly set down, that it is next to impossible to meet with any individual, to whom they shall all belong without exception. It is altogether impossible that there should be two, to whom every

thing that is said of the true Messiah can belong. He in whom there is one thing wanting, is not the right one: and he that does not invite investigation, by the light of prophecy, is not the right one. Moses and the prophets have described the person and circumstances of the incarnate God so minutely, that he must impose on himself who becomes the disciple of any other.

The remaining prophets who give us any further intimations of the coming of Christ, all lived and preached after the Babylonish captivity; and it is observable, that the captivity in Babylon gave a very remarkable turn to the affairs of the Jewish church, both in history and prophecy: it is made a signal epocha in our Saviour's genealogy—from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ, are fourteen generations, Matt. i. 17.

Haggai, who is the next that speaks of Christ, assures all nations, that he whom they desire shall come; and that the Jews, who were now building their temple for the worship of God, should see his glorious divine person in that house; and, therefore, the glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former. The glory of the former house, which Solomon built, and Nebuchadnezzar destroyed, was great on many accounts; not only because of the riches, art, and beauty of it above all other buildings; but, chiefly, for the evident signs of the divine presence which were here established, and the demon-

strations of divine mercy which were here exhibited *.

These were all wanting in this second temple; but the object of their worship should himself appear in it, with all the fulness of grace and truth, and from thence should bless all nations, to the utmost of their desires. All nations greatly stood in need of such a person; and wherever the prophecies of him had reached, they carried the assurance that in him should all the families of the earth be blessed. Therefore they desired and prayed for his coming who should direct their hearts into the love of God, and their feet into the way of truth and peace.

This poor edifice, therefore, which they were about to build, having laid the foundation of it,

* The signs of the divine presence, which were the chief glory of the temple built by Solomon, consisted in the ark of the covenant; thy mercy seat, which was upon it; the shecinah, or bright shining cloud, which was the emblem of the divine presence; the urim and thummim, in the high priest's breast-plate; the holy fire, which came down from heaven, at the dedication of the temple, and never went out while it stood; the spirit of prophecy, which the first temple was particularly honoured with; the holy anointing oil, for the purposes of consecration. The want of all these was abundantly repaired in the second temple, when the desire of all nations, the Lord whom they sought, came in his incarnation; and Christ our Saviour, who was the truest shecinah of the divine Majesty, honoured it with his presence, and in this respect the glory of the latter house did far exceed the glory of the former. He was the fulness of all these shadows. See Prideaux Connect. part I. lib. 3. p. 144—161.

should stand through all the wars and commotions of the times, till he came who should be the glory of Israel, and the righteous ruler of the Gentiles.

Zachariah is the next, who gives us certain tidings of the Prince of life. He began his ministry immediately after the former prophet. He sees the same things, and speaks of the same events, but with a great deal more amplification: he is the second prophet who cometh from God to the returned captives, and assures them, very expressly, of the coming of the Messiah. To encourage Joshua, the high priest, and the other his companions engaged with him in the same cause. He says, "Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee, for they are men to be wondered at; for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH."

"Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold, the man whose name is the Branch; he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord; even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory; and he shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." The temple of the Lord, which this man is to build, is the gospel church. He shall be both a priest, to stand before God for sinners to make atonement for them, and a king to go before his people for direction, rule,

and government; being well qualified for both offices, he shall consult the peace and happiness of his subjects.

This prophet takes notice of one particular mark, by which the king of Zion might be known in his state of humiliation; it was the manner of his coming into the holy city, on a particular and public occasion. He thus describes it—"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." The prophet seems as if he were present at the entry of Jesus into the holy city, when he came to the last passover which he attended there, Mark xi. 8, John xii.

He marks the Messiah too, by naming the price that was paid for his life; thirty pieces of silver, which amount to thirty seven shillings and sixpence*, the value of the life of a slave. This the rulers of the Jews offered, and Judas Iscariot received, to betray Christ. A goodly price truly; not worth accepting for such a prize: cast it into the earth among the potters; let them tread it under their feet, and bury it in the earth for ever.

* The thirty pieces of silver, are generally understood to be the shekells of the sanctury, and are supposed to be worth about two shillings and sixpence each, which makes the whole three pounds fifteen shillings. The price mentioned here, out of Pool's Annot. is but one half. Vide in loc.

He speaks very distinctly of the extreme sufferings which the incarnate Redeemer should endure, both in soul and body; he foretels that he should be pierced and wounded, and should bear the utmost severity that law and justice could inflict. His words are—"Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts; smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered." My fellow, my equal, saith the Lord of hosts, can be none other but Emmanuel, God with us, in our nature; God and man in one person, able to suffer all the afflictions that human nature could sustain, without being utterly destroyed by them. He is the faithful and good Shepherd, who layeth down his life for the sheep; he became man that he might be a sufferer, that the law might afflict him for the offences of his sheep. His disciples were scattered, but it was eventually to gather all nations around the standard of the cross.

We have now only to call upon the last of the prophets, which is Malachi, and to take in his testimony concerning the person and the incarnation of the Son of God. Being the last, and latest, of the prophets, he speaks of his coming with equal plainness. He preached about 400 years before this event, and finished his ministry young, as the Jews say *. In him, however, the spirit of

* They also say that Haggai and Zachariah died in the same year in which Malachi died.

prophecy ceased, after he had foretold the coming of the Lord to his temple. His words are these—"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the MESSENGER of the covenant, whom ye delight in. Behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts."

John Baptist is the first messenger, of whom the prophet speaks, who did prepare the way of the Lord, by preaching repentance, and pointing out the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. The office of this forerunner, or herald of the King of glory, is described more fully in the last part of the book; "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the Fathers unto the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

The Lord is the messenger of the covenant, who shall quickly come in the likeness of sinful flesh, and manifest himself in his church, and exhibit the blessings of the covenant of grace in his temple; behold he shall come, nothing can prevent it: it is equally sure as the divine existence itself; therefore the sun of righteousness shall most certainly arise; and though you hear no more of him from any succeeding prophet, you have sufficient assurance that he shall come, from the united tes-

timony of all preceding; you have no need of any further revelations, since all things are so clearly pointed out concerning him. Let these be the subject of your study and attention; that you may know his divine person, and submit to his authority: he shall as certainly come, as God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets; his coming is drawing nearer daily; and a few more generations will accomplish all that has been foretold of him: he shall come suddenly, or very soon. He shall come, perhaps, unexpectedly as to the time of it; though ye may delight in his person, and the promises he hath given you, you may, notwithstanding, be offended with the manner of his appearance, which will be poor and low. "Behold he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts: but who may abide the day of his coming. And who shall stand when he appeareth, for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."

2. We come to the practical reflexions on the prophecies in general, which has been before intimated as the last part of the present discourse. Here we make a stand, and look back on the survey of these predictions which we have briefly made; and being assured of the reality and certainty of them, may look up to the true God, the

author of them, with affectionate gratitude, for the true revelations he hath given us of the incarnation of his only begotten Son: our fallen state, and helpless miseries, have indeed been the occasion of this wonderful act of mercy; all the prophets have borne witness of, and had an eye to it; because the same spirit, from the beginning of the world, testified before hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. It is really admirable, that so many persons in different ages should, with one consent, foretel some one particular, and others another, concerning Christ; and all, at length, have their full accomplishment in him: this is the doing of the Lord, and may well be marvellous in our eyes. The Lord God of the holy prophets hath spoken unto them at sundry times, and in divers manners; that they might speak unto the world this leading truth, that it might be propagated from generation to generation; and in the fulness of time might be made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.

If we have any sensibility of the benefits of divine Revelation, or of the certainty of those things, which are evident to our senses, we ought, with the utmost thankfulness, to praise the unspeakable goodness of the eternal Father, for the gift of his only begotten Son; as we can never be sufficiently sensible of our obligations, we can never be sufficiently thankful for this grace.

It is true these prophecies, which we have been

considering, have been slighted, neglected, and, perhaps, opposed by false prophets: but this does not render them the less true and certain; for the eternal purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will shall stand; and every opposition to his infinite power must fall: the certainty of this lays a foundation for the confidence of all believers; for the true God can certainly make good his word.

In all these prophecies we have but one object pointed out, and that is the Son of God; he is promised by many characters and names, which cannot be applied to any other, because they are descriptive of his divine nature, and that state of humiliation into which he should descend; although the mighty God, and the everlasting Father, he should, notwithstanding, be the child born, and the Son given. Here, look which way we please, we have the only and true object of our faith and hope in view; we see the seed of the woman, the messenger, angel, or prince of the covenant; the Lord of life and glory; and the man of sorrows: he is the sum and substance of all these predictions, which begin with time, and terminate with his incarnation; when this blessed event is accomplished, the prophecy is sealed up, or confirmed; there is no more vision or revelation made of it. And we may observe it was necessary this should be done sometime previous to his nativity, that the church, by examining and comparing the most

ancient with the latest prophecies, might, with more certainty, distinguish and find out the person foretold; but this duty was quite neglected through the depravity of the times, and therefore his own people received him not when he came; they did not comprehend the meaning of those predictions, the truth of which they professed to believe; and were really the instruments of fulfiling them, in their treatment of Jesus Christ; contrary to their own will and intention; "For had they known it, they would not have crucified him."

The sublime predictions of a Saviour, together with all inferior ones respecting the empires, states, and revolutions of the world, exhibit undeniable proof of the being and perfections of God. Prophecy is a declaration of the divine will respecting future events, which are not yet, but shall, certainly come to pass. It is, strictly speaking, foretelling things to come, and lays a foundation for faith concerning the thing revealed, and is of use for warning, instruction, and comfort, amidst the various circumstances, which arise between the giving and accomplishment of the prediction. A learned doctor defines prophecy to be "A declaration of the divine prescience, looking at any distance through a train of infinite causes, known and unknown to us, upon a sure and certain effect. Whence he infers, that the being of prophecies supposeth the none-being of contingents, for

He upholds all things by the word of his power, and though there are many things which seem to us to be contingents, yet were they so indeed there could have been no prophecy: and there can be no contingent seemingly so loose and independent but it is a link of some chain*."

None but God can reveal future events. They are all in his hand, and depend upon the supremacy of his will. Every effect depends upon an infinite number of preceding causes, all which, in their order, must be known to him that foretels the effect, and therefore to God only, for none but God is omniscient. Omniscience, or infinite knowledge, is essential to the First Cause. Nothing can arise in the whole extent of creation, but it must be altogether known to him. He only, therefore, can make known with certainty, whatsoever shall come to pass; he is omnipresent, or in every place: this perfection is equally necessary to his existence as the former; because if he is not, he cannot know all things; and must be absent in some places, and be distant from some of his creatures, which every instant depend on his supporting hand: that moment, in which he leaves them, they must sink into nonentity, and by disappointing the intention of their existence, frustrate such predictions as had any, even the remotest, connexion, with them; which it is impossible can be the case with the ever present omnipotent Deity.

* Dr. Grew, Cosmol. Sacra, lib. IV. cap. 6.

most certainly can reveal all things, and infallibly direct them to their appointed end and purpose by his almighty unerring agency; his independence on all creatures, and all their actions, which is essential to his eternal existence, secures the immutability, of those revelations, which it hath pleased him to communicate to some for the general benefit of all: all must necessarily depend upon him, and he makes the wrath and rage of his enemies subservient to the purposes of his will.

Every perfection in the self-existent Being is concerned with prophesy, and gloriously magnified by it, particularly the prophecies we have been considering; by these, we may see, with undeniable certainty, not only the being, but the exercise of all those eternal and immutable excellencies which are in the divine nature; we see them exercised towards us in a peculiarly splendid manner, through the wonderful medium of the incarnation:—

> "Here the whole Deity is known,
> Nor dares a creature guess,
> Which of the glories brightest shone,
> The justice or the grace."

Each of these predictions, as it points to the divine person of the Son of God, exhibits his goodness, mercy, and love towards us, as sinners in misery. They all point out his truth, justice, and wisdom, and how they are exercised towards man-

kind in the various parts of that blessed plan, by which the human race is made so happy; we see the care, watchfulness, and the providence of God, illustriously held forth through all the ages of time, in a special and general way, among a people set apart from all people, to whom this person was to be made known from degree to degree, as times and their circumstances made necessary; and by them to be made known to all the earth. Divine providence, we may safely assert, had an especial eye to the person and incarnatian of the Redeemer of the world, in every transaction, revolution, or change, which took place, either among his chosen people, or the empires and states of the world.

From these sacred prophesies therefore we have the strongest defence against atheism; though the fool hath said in his heart there is no God; yet God hath said in each and every of these divine predictions, that he is the omniscient, or all-knowing, every where present, almighty, supreme, immutable eternal Deity; who hath, in truth, exercised his wisdom in contriving; his justice in establishing; his holiness in well ordering; his goodness in revealing; his mercy in applying; his power in executing; his care in superintending; his providence in directing, infallibly, all the means which the purposes of his infinite love had, before time began, devised for the salvation and happiness of guilty and miserable creatures. Infidelity, on the view of these unspeakable excellencies, which

shine so manifestly in these divine revelations, must hide its abandoned head: there is no room for it even in "The heart of the fool," and that creature must be worse than fool who can attentively look into them, and yet remain an unbeliever, and yet all men are so without the special influence of the Spirit.

Here let us look up to the true God, and adore his infinite name with affectionate gratitude for the revelations which he hath given us concerning his only begotten Son: we see both the prophecy and its fulfilment; and that not one thing hath failed concerning Christ, that had been predicted, or foretold of him, to him all the prophets gave witness; they all saw him, not only in the preceding prophecies which had been recorded in the church, and which they could read and hear of in common with others, but they saw him by special revelations of the Holy Ghost, who made known unto them his divine person; his humiliation in the various circumstances and sufferings of it, and the glorious consequences that should follow. "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister;" "But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets, and righteous men, have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." "These all died in

faith, not having received the promises; but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

These prophets and righteous men desired and prayed for the accomplishment of the promises which had been made concerning the Saviour; they had satisfying evidence of their truth, from the assurance that the faithful God would not deny himself, nor permit his church to expect what he would not perform; they therefore looked forward with adoring thankfulness, for that blessing of blessings, which was the sum and substance of all the promises respecting soul or body, time or eternity; the blessed MESSIAH was the object of their faith as well as ours; and a great cloud of witnesses suffered death itself, who were chiefly prophets and righteous men, because they believed the word of God; and hoped for salvation through his incarnation, sufferings, and death; he was the hope of Israel, they expected and rejoiced in the assurance of his appearing from one generation to another.

DISCOURSE V.

The Son of God represented by Sacrifices in his incarnate and suffering State.

SECONDLY, THE SACRIFICES.

Having come as near to the time of the incarnation as the prophecies could lead us, we return again, to consider the farther illustration of our subject, in those institutions which have an immediate respect to it: these are the SACRIFICES, which are nearly of equal antiquity with the prophecies. They lead us back to the beginning of the world, where we may contemplate the Creator, who, as we have seen, is the author of these predictions which exhibit the Son of God in humanity, instructing and teaching his guilty creatures how to look on the person of their promised Redeemer, in these figures or representations of him.

The picture we are going to exhibit, is drawn in blood; the blood of beasts, indeed, which is substituted in the place of human blood.

In this doctrine of substitution, we see the blood of beasts, of man, and of Emmanuel flowing. The first represents the last; and the human nature which deserves to suffer to the utmost extremity, to the shedding of the last drop of blood, is preserved by the offering and sprinkling of his most

holy, righteous, and precious blood, who is both God and man. If the substitution of this divine person be left out in the system of sacrifices, it exhibits such cruelty as cannot be justified, and such weakness as cannot be supposed in the infinitely wise. It is cruelty to shed the blood, and take away the life of an innocent creature, without a sufficient cause. The life of the meanest is of equal value to it, as the life of the greatest; and cannot in justice be impaired, or lessened, without an act of cruelty. The means of its comfort and happiness are sacred; and the Creator himself hath prohibited the stronger from oppressing or hurting the weaker. It is, therefore, cruel in the greater to oppress the less, when there is no cause of offence.

It is not unjust to exercise mercy to a guilty criminal, by the substitution of him who is able both to pardon and save him; and to substitute such representations of this great Saviour, as may lead the hopes of the penitent to rely on him. These, too, ought to have a lively and instructive resemblance of him whom they represent; that they may impress the mind with a view of his person and glory; with a sense of sin and the dangers following it; with the necessity and reality of an atonement to take it away; and with the infinite blessings connected with, and resulting from this sacrifice. When, therefore, we see the blessed Redeemer in the system of sacrifices, and

the blood of beasts flowing round all the altars of the earth, where any sense of the supreme Being and his worship obtained, we must, also, see compassion in the highest exercise of it, and mercy rejoicing against judgment; and much more against cruelty, by this means alone.

Without respect to the person of Emmanuel, we hear the whole apparatus which typified him, called weak and beggarly, Gal. iv. 9. They were unworthy of divine attention, either in their institution or use; they were too poor to deserve any notice from rational immortal creatures, and more especially, as they might be an occasion of superstition to those who did not see the reason of them, nor discover the substance represented.

The forming and establishing of this system has respect to these three things; *viz.* sin, satisfaction, and forgiveness. Each of these are of the highest importance; because they relate to the divine and human existence. The Almighty lays down here an epitome of that eternal purpose, which he purposed in himself; a miniature view of the way of salvation. This we may safely say he showed to our first parents, when he taught them both what and how to sacrifice; and we may well suppose, that he appointed them this service immediately after he had given them the first promise of a Saviour; for we find them very soon after, clothed with the skins of beasts: and it is generally admitted that these were offered in sacrifices. Nor do

we find any liberty intimated, in the first ages of the world, for the shedding of blood on any other occasion. The antediluvians were not permitted to live upon animal food, but on vegetables, or fruits of the earth; therefore we may justly infer, that the blood of animals was sacred to this service only; and that it was an act of disobedience to the will of the Creator, and an act of cruelty in itself, to shed the blood of any creature, except in sacrifice.

But it is from Moses we learn the most of this subject. By him God appointed other sacrifices, which were of an eucharistical, as well as those, which were of a sanguinary nature. And as these sacrifices are all typical, and have a manifest respect to the same person, we shall consider them both in order, beginning with those which prefigured his humiliation and sufferings.

The system, we have said, had respect unto sin, satisfaction, and forgiveness: we now take notice of three things in it. The first is, the ALTAR; the second, the VICTIM offered upon it; and the third, the PRIEST offering. These will afford us additional evidence, in proof of the truth and reality of that great event, which we attempt to illustrate: they are typical representations of him whom the prophecies describe. The first, is the figure delineated, exhibiting the several parts of this sublimely grand subject; the second, the description written, explaining these parts, pointing out their con-

nexions, uses and beauties: the third, the living image of him in whom all fulness dwells; and who consequently possesses all qualifications for the offices he must sustain in his incarnate state: all looking to, and holding up to public view, that blessed person whose dignity they scarcely imitate, who shall most certainly eclipse, and darken all their lustre; and, finally, throw them into oblivion, as signs of no further use. They were figures for the time then present; carnal ordinances, imposed until the time of reformation; till Christ came, an high priest of good things to come, Heb. ix. 9, 10, 11.

1. The ALTAR. This was a building, erected on purpose to burn sacrifices on; it was forever consecrated to this service; it was dedicated to God and his worship; it was, therefore, perpetually sacred. We have no account of any altars before the flood; and it is supposed the worshippers in the old world sacrificed on the ground, or by raising up an heap of earth, without any order, and which might be done with very little trouble, sufficient to lay their victim upon. But "Noah builded an altar unto the Lord, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar." Abraham built altars occasionally, in the various places where he set up his tent, when he intended to reside any time there, and at other places on particular occasions.

Moses had particular directions from God, re-

specting the altar which he was to build for the sacrifices of Israel; it was to be earth only, or unpolished stone. Immediately after the law was delivered, orders were given concerning the object, and the place of worship. "And the Lord said unto Moses, An altar of earth shalt thou make unto me, and shalt offer sacrifice thereon; thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen. And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone, for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it; neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar." This, says Henry, was an occasional altar, such as they now reared in the wilderness, before the tabernacle was erected, and afterwards upon special emergencies, for present use; such as Gideon, and Manoah, and Samuel built, and many others.

More particular directions are given respecting the altar that was to remain: "And thou shalt make an altar of Shittim wood, five cubits long and five cubits broad; the altar shall be four square, and the height thereof shall be three cubits; and thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof; his horns shall be of the same; and thou shalt overlay it with brass." This is called the brazen altar, which was to be carried on the shoulders of the levites, when the tribes marched in the wilderness. The ascent from the bottom to the top, was not by steps, but an inclined plain,

nearly as wide as the altar, and about twice the length of it; so that the officiating priest had not to climb, by which he might be endangered, but went up to his work in a progressive, regular, safe way.

The person of the Son of God is represented here; and, chiefly, the divine nature, which sanctified the human. Jesus Christ himself hath so taught us to understand it, in that question by which he rectifies the mistake of the Jews on this head; "Whether is greater the gift, or the altar which sanctifies the gift?" As to the altar and the offering, there was no sanctity in either, as they were material articles; but as they had respect to, and typified the Holy One, and the Just, they had a figurative and relative sanctity. They were instituted for holy purposes, which related to the Saviour, and the souls of men. The altar being dedicated to this service, let us see the resemblance.

Every altar, however mean or great, from the beginning of the world, to their total overthrow by the incarnation of Christ, had respect to him as a divine person. They were appointed and built to represent his personal divinity; for nothing else could sanctify the gift, or make it acceptable to the divine Majesty. The brazen altar, which we have now before us, was composed of smooth, beautiful, and the most incorruptible wood, overlaid with pure, unmixed, bright, and shining brass. These characters remind us of the durableness of

this small, but sacred erection. But what is the type to the antitype, who is the mighty God, the Father of eternity; who came into the world to sanctify himself, for the sanctification of his people; to devote or dedicate himself to the service of poor sinners? Because he was fit for the work of redemption, he was therefore set up and appointed from eternity for it: he was meek without revenge; beautiful without deformity; faithful and affectionate without variation; pure without a spot; sincere without disguise; the brightness of his Father's glory; glorious in every divine perfection; and the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.

It is four square; the breadth and the length are equal; exhibiting to the eye of faith the unity of God. He is one and equal in himself; one perfection in deity, is not longer or broader than another: his nature and operations harmonize in one design, and that is, to make his creatures blessed. This may intimate too, the universal benefits which the whole world should receive from him, in every quarter or corner of it. The east, west, north, and south, should be filled with the knowledge of God in humanity; all nations, people, tongues, kindreds, and languages, should serve him.

The four small towers, or spires, which were made at the four corners of it, one at each corner, called horns, might represent the divine authority,

and almighty power of him who is every where present, to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him. These, therefore, had a special privilege of protection to involuntary transgressors, but none for the presumptuous. It was but three cubits high, the height of an ordinary man. Why was it not elevated to the greatest height, and built on a basis broader than the tower of Babel, that it might the better represent the high and lofty one who inhabiteth eternity? Such an altar would be of human not divine contrivance, and could not represent the humility of the condescending God, who bows his heavens to come down; is found in fashion as a man, and accommodates himself to the low circumstances of his people, that mean and low capacities may have hope in his mercy.

The ascent was regular and gradual, and none but the priest ascended. None but kings and priests to God, the called, the chosen, and faithful, can comprehend the divine altar of the New Testament; and the knowledge of him is acquired by a regular and gradual improvement, till we come to the full measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; when we can stand on the altar of his divinity, like an officiating priest, and contemplate the sufferings of his pure and spotless humanity, represented by,

2. The VICTIM offered upon the altar. Here we have sufferings in their extremity, the wages of

sin demanded, as it were, of those who have no right to pay; and what appears still more absurd, of those who have no capacity of satisfying the demand: for it is impossible that the blood of goats and calves can atone for sin. These creatures were not capable of sin, why then should they suffer? They were the creatures of God, and he invested the property of them in the hands of guilty man: he appoints these as substitutes, which he will graciously accept in his stead, till HIS advent whom they represent; and then these creatures shall be no more subject to such sorrows. They were figures for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; but they pointed to him, who, by his own blood, should obtain eternal redemption for us; and who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, should purge the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God, Heb. ix. 9, 12, 14.

These creatures, which were appointed to this divine service, were of the most excellent and amiable qualifications; that they might better represent him whom they were to typify. Sheep for innocence and meekness; oxen for patience and perseverance in labour; doves for affection and cleanness; and goats the price of the field, Prov. xxvii. 26. Animals the most amiable, beloved, and valuable of the brute creation, were set apart

by divine appointment to the service of the altar; and were accounted clean in the law of ceremonies. These in their nature partook of dispositions nearer to mankind, whilst in a pure and holy state, than any others in the whole creation. The polluted swine, the snarling dog, the fierce lion, the majestic horse, the ravening bear, the cunning fox, and all the tribes of destructive, or mischievous animals, are totally excluded from the honour of shedding their blood in these holy solemnities. Their savage and cruel natures, were so dissimilar to the holiness, mercy, compassion, and love, which gave being to them, that they could not any way represent him, who is the fulness of all types; meek and lowly in heart; holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

The paschal lamb is the first, and not the least, striking resemblance of the Son of God in his incarnate state; it was not indeed a victim for the altar; but its blood was to be shed, and its flesh roasted, as if it had been upon one. This was a particular ordinance to Israel, before they had any public altar for their sacrifices. In this service, every householder was a priest for his own family, through all ages of the legal economy; herein he had many instructive lessons in the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh: as in the detention, the slaying, the roasting, the eating, the consuming, the care of the bones, &c. of this devoted beast: all which had a respect to the blessed

Emmanuel, and the design of his coming into the world; on which account he is said to be our passover, sacrificed for us, 1 Cor. v. 7. He was complete in every divine and human excellency; detained and bound to the house of Israel, from his birth to his death; suffered in the prime of life, in the evening of their economy, when his sacred body endured the fire of the wrath of God, with the malice of men and devils, that he might be provision for the perishing souls of sinners. Every thing in or about him was cast into this fire; but, a bone of him was not broken, John xix. 33, 36.

The reason of this institution, the use of the blood, and the manner of celebrating this sacred feast are highly instructive. But our narrow limits, and the nature of our illustration, do not admit of enlargement here; and particularly, as we shall open them more fully in the conclusion of this part.

We go on, therefore, to the annual solemnity of the seventh month, when the blood of victims flowed plentifully, and their fattened flesh flamed rapidly, on the brazen altar. On the tenth day of the month, about the latter end of our September*, the high priest was commanded to take a young bullock, for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering, for himself and for his house. He must

* Goodwin's Moses and Aaron, p. 85. Dr. Watts's Scrip. His. chap. v. sect. 5.

carry the blood shed into the most holy place, to sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat eastward, or from west to east; and before the mercy seat seven times. This he was to do in the holy dress of a common priest. "On this day," says an elegant writer, "the Jewish high priest was not to array himself in the most costly attire, but with his linen garments. An emblem of the Christian high priest's incarnation, who, when he came to expiate our sin, did not array himself with light as with a garment, but with the robe of our human nature, which, though clean and white, was without splendor or magnificence *."

He must next make atonement for the people; which was done by two goats: one for the Lord, to be offered upon the altar, and the other for the people, to carry their sins, imputed to it, into the wilderness, or land of oblivion; and therefore called the scape goat. These two victims were purchased with the public money, taken out of the treasury; and were placed before the high priest, who was now robed in his splendid pontificals, the one on his right hand and the other on his left. The lot was drawn by him, to determine which should suffer and which escape. That for the Lord was slain on the north side of the altar, and the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat, and before it seven times, as he had done for his own sins but a little

* Mac Ewen's Typical Things, p. 178.

before, and its carcass wholly consumed in the flames.

This done, the scape goat was brought before him; over which he confessed the sins of the whole nation, imputing them to this beast, by the imposition of both his hands on its head; and then delivered it to a proper person to conduct it to some desart, perhaps beyond the bounds of the Holy Land, which might be Idumea, or Arabia; where it was never more heard of, or seen, by any Israelite. This was the yearly atonement for the sins of the people.

Beyond a doubt, these two animals typified him who was able to bear and carry away the sins of the world. They may teach us these two things concerning him: first, the full expiation of our guilt, by the sacrifice of himself; for the Son of God was made to be sin for us, or a sin offering in our stead; which could not be but by the imputation of our sins to his divine person. Second, the blessed efficacy of his sacrifice; by which guilt is cancelled, taken away, and lost for ever, like the scape goat never more to be found. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." In those days, and at that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and shall not be found, Jer. l. 20, and 31, 34.

Seeing these two goats represented the same person, and both treated so differently on the same

occasion, may well remind us of two equally different situations in which the antitype may be considered. In the solemn service of the day, we see death and life exemplified in these two creatures, one suffering, and the other surviving; which may intimate to us, both the death, and the resurrection of the incarnate Saviour: who after he made atonement by the shedding of his blood, and suffered the painful and shameful death of the cross, soon rose from the dead, and was carried into all the world, called the wilderness of the people (Ezek. xx. 35) by fit men, called and qualified by the Holy Ghost; who were to proclaim to lost sinners, that he who suffered at Jerusalem, was truly the Son of God, and bore the sins of men laid upon him, to carry away the guilt and the punishment for ever, Isa. xliii. 25, Micah vii. 19.

Hence, the holy apostles went out preaching Jesus and the resurrection; repentance and faith to every creature: convincing Jews and Gentiles, that he, though a man, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, a man every where, and every way spoken against, as a blasphemer and imposter; whose doctrines and pretensions were retorted, and thrown upon him as dung, which deserved, together with himself, to be burned and destroyed out of the earth, notwithstanding he was declared to be the Son of God, by his resurrection from the dead. "He died for our offences, and rose again for our justification." "The just for the unjust, that he

might bring us to God." This crucified victim, must be carried into all nations, for the obedience of faith; and the benefits of his atonement must be FREELY offered by these fit men; men of time, of years and discretion *; who, when they have finished their duty, and done their best, have need to wash in the fountain that is opened for sin and uncleanness; like the person who, when he led the goat into the wilderness, washed his flesh in water when he returned.

We might enlarge on other solemnities of this seventh month; as the feast of trumpets and of tabernacles, and the sacrifices prescribed for each: the pentecost, which was fifty days after the passover, called also the feast of weeks; the new moons, or monthly festivals. But as these are all included in the solemn day of atonement, and can afford us no more clear illustration of our subject than this gives us, we leave them †.

We cannot leave these victims however, without noticing those which were offered in sacrifice on the altar daily: we have here a constant representation of the Lamb of God from the day of the appointment in the wilderness, to the day when the substance of all the shadows came; not a day in all that time was without shedding of blood;

* Pool on Levit. xvi. 23.

† See most of these holy times prescribed in Levit. xxiii.; and the several sacrifices belonging to them in Numbers, chap. xxviii. and xxix.

nine in the morning, and three in the evening, of each day, were the stated times of public service, which continued fifteen centuries and a half; they were constant emblems of that blood, which they represented one thousand five hundred and twenty four years, in which year the Lamb of God was actually slain, and shed his blood on the cross.

Having staid long enough in viewing the victims, which were sacrificed on the altar, let us observe the fire, which equally belongs to both: here we see the flames ascending from the brazen grate of net-work, which was the covering of the altar; the wood and the offering were laid in order upon it, and the fire seized and consumed both; consuming them to ashes, which fell into the earth under the whole.

The fire affected not, nor consumed the altar; only the sacrifices which were laid upon it: this was kindled by the immediate power of him who authorised the altar, and the system of sacrifices to be burnt upon it; it was a supernatural production; therefore, called the fire of the Lord; quite distinct in its nature and uses from elementary, electrical, or culinary; pure, simple, and uncompounded: it manifested the divine acceptance, both of the altar and the offering; but more particularly of the person sacrificing, when he had respect to, and faith in, the mercy promised to Abraham.

Here we have a representation or symbol of the

just, bright, and righteous wrath of God against sin; which, like fire, is strong and powerful, and must burn to the nethermost hell; that is, with the utmost severity, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; the human nature of the incarnate God endured this to the last degree of severity; as the fire could not affect the altar, however great and outrageous, but only the combustible matter placed upon it; so the divine nature of the Son of God could not be tinged with the flames of the Father's wrath; but his human nature suffered and endured it to the utmost:—this we shall see in the last part of his history.

3. The PRIEST officiating. As all these things have an holy and profound solemnity, arising from the divine Person represented and held forth by them; so holy men, only, fitted and prepared of God, ought to be employed in them. What love and reverence to God is connected with the character that serves at his altar. Hence the precept, "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord:" the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth is holy; order and beauty, regularity and harmony, prevail in all his works, which manifest what he is in himself, the holy, pure, and blessed God. Holiness becometh his habitation for ever; all the vessels of his house are holy, even the earthen as well as the golden; their holiness is not in themselves, but in him who condescends to use them; if then there be a relative holiness in those things,

which are employed in the service of the holy God; how much more is real holiness of heart and life necessary in his servants; their place is holy on which they stand, and their feet ought to be clean from all defilement.

If places and things are dedicated by divine authority to the high and honourable service of representing and preaching the only begotten Son of God in his incarnate state; we may well expect that persons chosen from among their fellow-men, men endowed with peculiar excellencies of the same nature as that he should assume; the most excellent, noble, and worthy part of the creation; creatures who should eternally enjoy the blessings of his life and death: we may well expect, I say, that a deputation of a certain class of these should be placed at the head of this typical system.

The first-born, in whom the right of inheritance, of priesthood, and of instruction, centred, must stand aside, when the full representation of Emmanuel is drawn and set up; it is proper that an order of men should come forward here, whose business should be to attend on this very thing, that they might represent something in him, whom the altar, the sacrifice, and the burning flame, represented; if the first was a figure of his humanity, the second of his divinity, and the third of the fiery indignation of God against sin; why may not the priest represent the offices for which he is so fully qualified, and in which he is established for ever.

This is a province to which neither the altar, nor the offering can aspire; because they want the requisites, indispensably necessary here; reason, reflexion, exercise, and devotion, are necessary to the office of the priesthood, and indispensably so, to typify him, whose offices, as prophet, priest, and king of his church, are eternal and unchangeable.

It may be proper here to mention Melchisedec, that priest of the most high God, who was the first and most eminent type of the priesthood of the incarnate divinity. Dr. Owen observes, "The first personal instituted type of Christ was a priest; this was Melchisedec. There were before real instituted types of his work, as sacrifices; and there were moral types of his person, as Adam, Abel, and Noah, which represented him in sundry things; but no one before Melchisedec was an instituted personal type of Christ. And that which God taught herein was, that the foundation of all that the Lord Christ had to do in, and for the church, was laid in his priestly office, whereby he made atonement and reconciliation for sin." I refer to that great author's exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, for the illustration and application of this illustrious figure of his priestly office, chap. vii. 1—3.

Now consider how great this man was; his greatness consisted not in his being the king of righteousness, so much as in his being the priest

* Dr. William's Abridgment, vol. III. p. 260.

of the most high God, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils, who was, perhaps, more rich and powerful than Melchisedec. But this holy prophet and mighty prince, acknowledged the higher dignity of the priest, as he was the representative of the most high and holy God; and seeing, no doubt, in this great man a striking resemblance of the continual priesthood of the Son of God.

Aaron and his sons are called to this high and most sacred service; he must therefore be consecrated, and set apart for it, in the most solemn manner: after he is appointed to the office, he must be washed with water, clothed with his robes, anointed with the holy oil, and officiate in his place. The most complete personal qualifications were indispensably requisite to his appointment and consecration. His mental capacity must be sound, sanctified, and holy; a dwarfish carnal mind is exceedingly unsuitable to appear before the supreme Author of *all* things, and is very improper to represent him in any respect, whether in office, or in type, or in both.

Here we cannot help seeing the perfection of the human nature in the person of the incarnate Saviour, who was pure and holy without sin; clothed with the beautiful garments of salvation; with the love of souls in his heart; the weight of the church on his shoulders; and the crown of holiness on his head. In his consecration at his

baptism, he was anointed with the Holy Ghost above measure, and eminently fitted for every office to which he was now called, and particularly to appear in the presence of God for us, as the everlasting high priest of his church.

In the order of Aaron, they were truly many priests; because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but this man, because he continueth for ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. The whole levitical institution, of which Aaron was the head, was so imperfect through the weakness and carnality of it, that it was not capable of eternal duration; but it was complete enough to represent the immortal high priest of the Gospel, who, like Melchisedec, could have no successor, because he abideth a priest continually; he is risen from the dead to die no more; death hath no more dominion over him; therefore he ever liveth to make intercession for us, Heb. vii. 25.

When we consider the ground or reason of this institution, both in the type and antitype, we cannot help observing the highest exercise of wisdom, love, and ability; wisdom, in the contrivance of the whole scheme, in the figure, as well as the thing prefigured in the Old Testament priesthood, but more fully in that of the New; love, in the highest degree, to unworthy and guilty creatures, proceeding from, and directed by, the unerring councils of the Eternal, who giveth not an account of the reasons of his conduct; ability, in that the

purposes of grace and good will to men, are carried on by his omnipotence, upholding the weak and feeble representation, as well as the Redeemer represented, against the devil and all the gates of hell.

DISCOURSE VI.

Eucharistical Offerings; or Sacrifices of Thanksgivings.

WHAT we have seen of the sanguinary part of the typical portrait of the incarnate God, will be allowed, we presume, to be sufficient for our present illustration: we proceed now to consider, and briefly to bring forward, that which we have called EUCHARISTICAL OFFERINGS. They are expressions of gratitude and thankfulness for benefits received. But as the effects of divine mercy, and the things referred to, being established by positive law; they may also have a typical signification, illustrative of the better dispensation and richer grace which should follow his manifestation. Why should the sufferings and death of the great sacrifice for sin, be so illustriously represented, and the benefits of it be forgotten; the system that represents the first, in all reason, ought to have some respect to the last, and not a partial but a particular respect, pointing out the joys as well as the sorrows of Emmanuel.

The design of the Son of God, in submitting to the sorrows he endured, was to procure the blessings typified by these offerings, and that he might acquire a right as the son of man to administer them to the household of faith. They therefore became proper objects of representation, as well as the blessed Saviour, to whom they essentially belonged; his sufferings and death could be of no advantage to mankind without them; those are the procuring cause of these; and why should the cause be so particularly set forth, and not the effect? or why should the price be so fully stated, and no reference be had to the thing purchased? Hence we see a proper reason for the peace-offerings, meat-offerings, drink-offerings, and thank-offerings, which were required in the symbolical system; in these the Almighty exhibited the fulness and joys of his grace, and especially as they were connected with the great propitiation to be made by the blood of his only begotten. And here we see the humble and thankful acknowledgements of the devout believer, when engaged in any of these solemnities, as they were expressions of his affectionate grateful heart, to the Author of all his present consolations and future expected joys.

We have seen the rational and animal creation employed in this sacred service: we are now to consider the vegetable, or inanimate part of it, that we may see how far Emmanuel's glory is represented by it: let us then attend to these lead-

ing articles in this symbolical economy, as it relates to the fruits of the earth, *viz.* the salt, corn, oil, frankincense, and wine; these are so frequently employed on the altar, that it becomes us to enquire into the reason of it, and to point out the resemblance with the thing signified.

We observed, in the beginning of our last discourse, that, without respect to this most sacred Person, the bloody system of sacrifices could not be vindicated from the charge of cruelty; so here, without respect to him, these oblations may be charged with profusion and extravagance; why this waste of the precious fruits of the earth, but to represent the fulness of grace that dwells in him, out of which all are constantly receiving? The fine flower, mingled with oil and wine, may well represent the fulness, the beauty, and the joy, which should accompany the person, and flow from the incarnation of the Son of God. Corn is an emblem of plenty; salt of solidity; oil of beauty; wine of gladness and joy; and frankincense of acceptance. These are the benefits which poor wretched creatures stand in need of; and these the Redeemer came to bestow, and will infallibly administer, without money or price, to the poor, who have no bread; to the deformed and polluted, who have no beauty; to the diseased and wretched, who are lost to all comfort and chearfulness.

Observe, in the first place, the salt, with which every offering was seasoned; "Every oblation of

thy meat-offering thou shalt season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat-offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt." This is a symbol of solidity, incorruption, duration, and stability; it signified to the worshipper, that purity of mind, and sincerity of heart, with which it was necessary to appear before God, and might denote that fellowship and communion with him, which the oblations so seasoned intimated. A covenant of salt is a firm, lasting, immutable agreement, which shall stand between the parties, without variation or change, for the time stipulated; such was the covenant of God with Israel, in that dispensation under which he placed them: it was to stand till the coming of the promised seed, the great prophet, the king Messiah; such was the covenant of David, which is also called a covenant of salt! It is seasonable, savoury, well-ordered in all things, and sure; and shall not only last through the legal levitical dispensation, but shall be renewed in his great antitype, and extend under his government unto the consummation of all things. The immutability and faithfulness of God become proper subjects of contemplation here; these perfections are concerned in every oblation; they may be said to be the salt and seasoning of every offering; and particularly of him who is faithfulness itself, whose speech was always with grace, and seasoned with this incorruptible salt.

This article, whether it be a mineral brought from the bowels of the earth, or a composition extracted from the saline quality of the waters of the mighty ocean, is of that sharp piercing insinuating nature, that it enters into the substance of all soft and flexible bodies: opposing or destroying the corruptions of them, rendering them sweet and pleasant, both to the taste and smell, and making them salutary to animal life, and to vegetation itself. How properly does this point out, not only the character, but the real disposition of the faithful and true witness, who was, in his manhood, salted with the purest sincerity, and unsullied fidelity, towards God and man; no offering of whatever kind was acceptable before God, nor any offerer justified, without being partakers of the same qualifications from the same source; the incarnate God communicates the salt of sincerity and truth to every believer; and therewith all their oblations presented on that altar, which sanctifies the gift, are perfumed; they come up before him with a sweet smelling savour.

2. The meat-offering of fine flour, mingled or mixed with oil, which was demanded by the levitical law, made of corn, which grows out of, and is nourished by the earth. We have hinted, that corn is an emblem of plenty; so it is explained by Joseph, when he interpreted Pharoah's dreams; and Isaac sustained Jacob with plenty of corn, intimating that his posterity should never be in want

of bread. This, we need not say, is the chief stay, or staff of life; and therefore it is under the special promise of divine Providence, and no less so than life itself; hence we may very easily admit a prophetic and typical representation of the Saviour of the world under this character, who calls himself the bread of life. Whether the spirit of prophesy, by Isaiah, meant to point out the atoning sacrifice for sin by these words; "Bread-corn is bruised;" we will not be positive, but it is certain Jesus Christ our passover, sacrificed for us, meant himself, when he said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." We need not here open the contrast, or explain the metaphor, which our blessed Lord alludes to; our business is with the typical offering of the bruised corn, when made into fine flower, and the signification of it, in relation to the benefits of the incarnate suffering Redeemer.

The meat-offering of fine flower, beaten out of green ears of corn, dried by the fire, had respect, first, to the grateful acknowledgments, which the thankful worshipper offered to God, for the fruits and blessings of the earth; but to the believer, the chief thing referred to, was the fulness of that atonement, made by the satisfying obedience and death of the condescending Saviour; that spiritual provision might be made for his immortal soul; that, by virtue of this, security might be obtained

for his eternal felicity and glory. Discovering these things by the enlightened eye of faith, and living upon them, as the source of his present satisfaction and joy; he chearfully could devote a portion of his daily bread to the service of his sanctuary, in humble acknowledgment of the greater benefits of the bread, which endureth unto everlasting life, John vi. 27.

The Israelite indeed saw, as the true Christian does, that the institutions of the worldly sanctuary were chiefly illustrations of better things to come, and that the first and greatest thing of all was the satisfaction to be given for the sins of the world to the law and justice of God; and also, that these typical services were only acceptable to God, as they had respect to him who could make the atonement.

Atonement is that which makes up the difference between differing parties: here it is a satisfaction of God's justice, by giving a ransom, or an equivalent, to balance the offence done by sin. The word signifies a covering, and intimates that the offences of men are covered from the avenging righteous judgment of God, by the atoning sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ. Ceremonial offerings did not appease the divine justice for any offences which were of a spiritual and moral nature; they only made atonement for those which were ceremonial, and were a security against temporal punishment; and they typified the all-sufficient atonement of Jesus Christ, which sufficiently

satisfies for our most heinous crimes: "And the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin: he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, 1 John i. 7, 9.

The fulness or sufficiency of the atonement of the blessed sacrifice, made by the Son of God for sin, appears by the Father's acknowledgment of him at his baptism; transfiguration; when he was entering upon his sufferings; when he rose again from the dead; and his ascension into, and supreme glory in, heaven followed, with the outpouring of the Holy Ghost; these are sufficient proofs of that plenty, fulness, and riches, which are in the person and merit of Christ. Here he presents a meat-offering worthy of the acceptance of God, and makes all his children partakers of it; it is true substantial corn, fit for the nourishment of souls; it is not leavened with malice or wickedness, nor made delicious to flesh and blood with the honey of earthly gratification, such as are peculiar to heathens, or carnal men; but with sincerity and truth, which will stand with honour before God to all eternity.

The corn of Egypt, in its greatest plenty, is but a faint representation here; however there was enough to supply all present wants, and particularly the house of Israel: the superabundant bounty of divine goodness always provided enough for the supply of the necessities of his servants,

that they might have plenty, both to eat and to offer, for the state and the church, for themselves and their needy neighbours. How exceedingly abundant is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? here is a fulness that cannot be measured; a plenty that cannot be exhausted; it supplies heaven and earth, and will be the same when eternity opens, as it was when time began; all the supplies of all generations of the church have not exhausted this in the least degree; it is "heaven's inexhaustible exhausted fund *."

Every repetition of the oblation of which we now speak, required faith in the great propitiation, without which it was impossible to please God; prayer went up with the offering, that it might be acceptable; and that divine mercy and compassion might be exercised towards the sinful unworthy offerer; reliance on the loving-kindness of God, and a well-grounded hope that the sacrifice presented by the priest was not in vain, laid a foundation for that praise and joy, which these eucharistic offerings naturally required; the performance of the duties incumbent on the worshippers in this legal economy, required the exercise of every divine gift and grace, which they had received; the reality and truth of which they hereby professed to enjoy; so that they were saved by faith as well as we. By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.

* Dr. Young.

What cause of joy and praise does the plentiful satisfaction of the Son of God afford to all, who present their souls and bodies as living sacrifices, by faith and prayer, through him, as the great high priest before God? Let us therefore draw near with true hearts in full assurance of faith.

3. Having seen the bread which strengthens men's heart, let us now contemplate the oil that maketh his face to shine. Man is that object for whom all these divine institutions are established; there must be therefore in him something more excellent than common observation can discover.

Oil is one of these things, which we have said, is an emblem of beauty, and which the Redeemer came to bestow on the deformed and polluted; its use in sacrifices, and in the various anointings of persons and things, was to typify the beautiful holiness of the divine person, the reality of whose incarnation we now illustrate; as God and man he was perfectly beautiful, and enjoyed the gifts and qualifications requisite to his great undertaking in the most perfect degree: in these he is altogether lovely, the fairest among ten thousand.

The juice of the olive must be mingled with the fine flower of the meat-offering; to illustrate the soft, sweet, saving and peaceful nature of all that grace which flows from, and accompanies the great atonement for sin. See a representation of that flaming love, which made such provision for dying, perish-

ing souls! It is this insinuates itself into every act of Emmanuel's life, and burns with the greatest purity and force, in his ignominious painful death. The holy anointing oil, which Moses made by the command of God, of the principal spices, of pure myrrh, sweet cinnamon, sweet calamus, cassia, and oil of olive, with which the tabernacle, the ark of the testimony, the table and all his vessels, the candlestick and his branches, the altar of incense and his censers, the altar of burnt-offering with all his dishes, and the laver and his foot, were anointed and sanctified to the most holy uses, intimated that most pure, sweet, and holy Spirit, with which the Son of God, all his ministers, his church, and ordinances, are richly endowed. He, as the head, had in all things the pre-eminence; was anointed with the Holy Ghost above measure; grace, therefore, flowed from his lips; his doctrine was sweet, his feet beautiful in holiness: in no step can any defilement be discovered. Unto mourners in Zion he gives beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, Isa. lxi. 2, 3.

This essence of the olive tree, so profusely used in all these eucharistical oblations, being a representation of the shining graces of *God with us*; we may well expect to find them all burning and beautiful in their proper place and order: so we shall find them, in the sacred person of Jesus Christ. It is in allusion to this, that we find so

frequent mention made of oil, and of being anointed in the New Testament: the prophecies of pouring out the Spirit allude to it: and that his operations, gifts and grace, are illustrated by this, we hope to make more fully appear in its proper place.

The oil of grace comprehends all the beauties of holiness, which surpass description. The Song of Songs, which sets forth a greater than Solomon, Jesus Christ, whose name is peace, and whose garments are salvation, attracts the sincere, humble, and teachable soul, with the precious, beautiful, sweet ointment of his grace; therefore, the believer having tasted that the Lord is gracious, confesses with humble thankfulness, "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth." I was first drawn to thee, because of the sweet savour of that heavenly oil, with which thou art anointed; it perfumes all thy person, and all places whithersoever thou comest. Thy ointments are good in their nature, and bring forth goodness in their effects. They are pleasant and delightful to every honest and upright heart, and the mention of thy name gives alacrity to every act of duty. Every precept laid down by thy authority, savours of that oil of beautiful holiness, which draws pure hearts into willing obedience; therefore they do love thee. "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness, therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. All thy garments smell of

myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad."

4. Frankincense. This, we have said, is an emblem of acceptance. The use of it was required in these offerings we now treat of, more particularly than any others; it added a sweetness and fragrancy to them, without which they would have been insipid and unsavory. It was a rich odoriferous gum, gathered from trees which were much cultivated in Syria and Arabia*, in great request among idolaters as well as true worshippers of the only one God. It was to be an ingredient in that composition, which was to be tempered together after the art of the apothecary, and which it was death to imitate. "And the Lord said unto Moses, take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, onycha, and galbanum; these sweet spices with pure frankincense: of each there shall be an equal weight: and thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection, after the art of the apothecary, tempered together pure and holy."

It was to be put upon the meat-offering, together with the oil and the salt; but not upon the sin-offering, or any of those which required the shedding of blood, or the offerings of jealousy. It was to be put upon the loaves of shew bread, which stood on the table in the sanctuary. The officiating priest took away the old loaves, and replaced them with new, every Sabbath morning.

* See Brown's Dict. in ver.

They stood in two rows, six in a row, upon the pure table before the Lord; and he put pure frankincense on each row, every Sabbath continually. The use of this aromatic in every part of the service in which it was employed, was to perfume, and render the whole more pleasing and acceptable; that the priest and the people might enjoy a satisfaction in their service: and intimated to them, their persons and adorations, perfumed with the sweet smelling grace of the Holy Spirit, communicated to them by faith in the atoning Saviour's obedience and death, were pleasing and acceptable to God.

Incense, therefore, was of constant and perpetual use. There was an altar, dedicated and set up in the sanctuary, on which it was to be offered morning and evening in the daily service; it was overlaid with gold, and stood parallel to the table of shew bread, upon both of which the golden candlestick, containing the seven lamps of oil, perpetually shone. A certain quantity of this rich and sweet perfume was put into a golden cup, called a censer: it was kindled with fire from the brazen altar, carried into the holy place, and set on this altar of incense by the officiating priest. Here it flamed, and raised a cloud of smoke, while he trimmed the candlestick, and snuffed the lamps. This done, he came out to bless the people, leaving a sweet smelling savour of the service on the golden table, in the smoking incense behind him.

It is in allusion to this, that the holy psalmist

prays, " Let my prayer come up before thee as incense." As if he had said—" Let my soul be perfumed with thy divine grace; let my affections be inflamed with thy love, kindled from the altar of my Saviour's divinity, whose love for me was so powerful and strong, that all the woes and miseries which law and justice, earth and hell, could pour out on his innocent, sacred humanity, could not abate or quench. He hath opened the way of my return to thee, and hath brought me into thy favour and presence. Let the gratitude and praises of a poor, but affectionate heart be acceptable in thy sight. Let not the few grains of incense which I presume to offer, touched with the finger of my Redeemer's love, be rejected; but permit my fervent desires, and feeble expressions of thankfulness to ascend up before thee like the cloud of incense in the holy place."

Such sentiments, without doubt, occupied the minds of all the pious, who had any faith in the promised Messiah, and who waited for the eternal redemption promised through his incarnation. It is of these Solomon speaks, in various places of his divine Song. He describes them as enjoying the substance of that infinitely rich grace, which the type we speak of represented. Viewing the whole body of the church in her militant state, in the possession of all those heavenly virtues which constitute her glory and felicity; he asks—" Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars

of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant? Song iii. 6. This is a question, in which the inspired author expresses some degree of wonder and surprise. He asks, Who is she* so beautifully adorned in such bright and precious excellencies?

Her heart inflam'd with holy, heav'nly fire,
Mounts boldly upward, in devoutest mood:
Leaves earth beneath her, ventures to aspire
Unto the throne and presence of her God.
The smoke ascending in the air serene
Rolls on, revolving, to the source of light;
So, her renewed soul, in godlike mien,
Ascends to him who is her chief delight;
Her mind perfumed with heavenly incense sweet,
More sweetly smells, than flow'ry May in spring;
With sav'ry graces she is all complete,
To entertain her glorious Lord and King.
The precious powders of which merchants boast,
Compared with her perfumes, are wholly lost.
Her frankincense, and myrrh, come from above;
They grow in heaven, where every herb is love.

This rich perfume used in sacrifices was to typify and represent the grace and merits of Christ. It made a distinguished part in all eucharistical oblations called thank-offerings, in which praise was rendered to God for all his benefits and mercies bestowed on them; because the Son of God should come in the fulness of grace and truth,

* See Mr. R. Erskine's Paraph. in loc. p. 70, note. Vide Leigh's Crit. Sac. in loc. p. 270.

with every qualification that humanity could be dignified with. It was, therefore, highly proper to represent this, in that dark imperfect dispensation, by that abundance of sweet smelling incense, which taught them daily the acceptableness of his intercession for them; that they might be instructed, by seeing a figure of the eternal High Priest in heaven officiating for their souls, as well as by hearing that he should be incarnate to atone for their sins, and by his sweet and perfuming grace render all believers acceptable to God.

When oblations were offered to God, without respect to him who could both save and sanctify the soul, they were an abomination, Isa. i. 13, and lxvi. 3. They were impious, if not profane, even when offered upon his own altar. He therefore condemns the abuse of them through the infidelity of the worshipper, as certainly and fully as burning incense upon an idolatrous altar to the vanities of the Gentiles, Jer. xi. 12, 17. Hence, faith in Christ the Messiah was indispensably necessary to acceptable worship, even in the temple economy.

The prophets frequently allude to this, when they describe the blessed effects which shall follow his manifestation: and the holy apostle John particularly dwells upon it, when he brings in the priestly office of his blessed Lord, in his book of the Revelation. He represents the whole church, both in her ministers and members, falling down before the Lamb in the profoundest reverence and

humility: having every one of them harps: intimating, that their hearts were tuned to sing his praises with holy joy; and golden vials full of odours. Each of them appeared with cups full of incense, like the typical censers of pure gold, in which the priests were wont to burn incense before the Lord; which are the prayers of the saints. They offered up their supplications, and praises, in the name, and perfumed with the all-sufficient merit of the great and exalted High Priest, which made them pleasant and acceptable to God.

The glorious Angel of God's presence, who in his incarnate person is the Gospel high priest, is represented as standing in a ministering posture before the altar of burnt-offering, to signify the atonement he had made by his blood; and then as having a golden censer, filled with live coals from the altar, to signify that his mediation is carried on in virtue of his expiatory sacrifice. Much incense is given him, to signify the fulness of his merit, that he might give, or add it to the humble, importunate, believing prayers of all that are cleansed by his blood, and sanctified by his Spirit, to render them acceptable to God before the mercy-seat, or throne of grace. And as the perfuming smoke of incense, which was made of the finest aromatic spices, ascended up to heaven, like a cloud, with the prayers of the congregation of Israel; so, the virtue of Christ's sacrifice, mingled, like a sweet odour, with the prayers of holy worshippers, and

like the priest presenting the burning perfume before God, the blessed Mediator, in his ever-prevailing advocacy, covers their imperfections, and recommends them to the divine favour, for audience and acceptance.

It was the application of wine to any of these eucharistical oblations, that denominated them drink-offerings. The wine was to be drank, the meat to be eaten, and the incense must be burned, together with the oil and the salt. When these were offered voluntarily, by a person, a family, or select company, it was then a free-will-offering. These fruits of the earth, of the field, and of the vineyard, were most generally united in the meat-offering, drink-offering, peace-offering, thank-offering, and free-will-offering. One offering might include all these characters, as they did not take their denomination from the materials of the oblation, so much as from the disposition and design of the worshipper. But it will add nothing to our illustration to enter into these particulars; we go on, therefore, to take notice of that wine which cheereth God and Man. Judges ix. 13.

Wine is a most useful, and consequently a most necessary article in life; it maketh glad the heart of man; it revives his animal spirits when he is oppressed with sorrow. It is a great nourisher of his human frame, and, used in moderation, is the most excellent cordial. Hence it is, as it were, a constant comforter to human nature, and a com-

mon metaphor under which we see the accommodations of life; the rich blessings of the everlasting Gospel; the consolations needful to the afflicted soul; and the more precious blood of the incarnate Son of God represented. Why may we not then contemplate the joy and gladness, which he administers to the afflicted conscience of the guilty sinner, in this typical representation? See the wine, the blood of the grape, poured on the fine flour mingled with oil, frankincense, and salt! This adds to the richness and spirit of the whole: what other material article can be added. Here is an assemblage of the most valuable gums and juices that nature can produce: they are united, and constitute one whole: how valuable are each of these to such as know their worth! But here we see them invaluable, because of the office to which they are appointed: they represent the grace of him who is unsearchable.

This spirituous liquid, used so commonly in these eucharistical oblations, led the people of God to exercise their faith in the promised Messiah, who, from his own unspeakable fulness, should enrich their souls with all saving grace, and hence turn their mournings into inexpressible joys. They could contemplate his human nature as the true vine; which, though weak and helpless in itself, yet did produce to them that heavenly divine joy, which was the cause of their songs even in the night of legal ceremonies, or of personal affliction and distress. They saw that he was the con-

solation of Israel in the present times, and that in all succeeding ages he should be the glory and joy of all the ends of the earth. He should pour out the spirit of grace upon the offerings and oblations of true believers, and make them joyful in his house of prayer; he would comfort them, and cheer their hearts with flagons, or plenty of wine, when he should send the Holy Ghost for this express purpose.

They could testify, from personal knowledge, and repeated experience, that his love was better than wine, than the richest or best wines. It is better in nature and quality, in operation and effects, in its uses and consequences. The clusters of the vine, which produce the best of wine, go down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak. In the reign of Solomon, the fruit of the true and living vine was much enjoyed. David's prophecies of him were just published, and fresh in the memory of every humble worshipper. The songs which he composed, were, doubtless, in every believer's hands; they were sung with joy, with the spirit and with the understanding also, in all their public assemblies; and methinks these glorious days of divine grace were never equalled in the typical church, when Judah and Israel dwelt safely; every man under his vine, and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon. It was then they sat under his shadow with great delight: they frequently visited his banqueting house: his holy temple was the place where

they enjoyed divine communion. Here the banner of his love was spread over them: they were hid in the secret of his presence, from the pride of man, and kept secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues; they therefore said, thou art my hiding place, thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shall compass me about with songs of deliverance: Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.

It is from these two holy and eminent kings, we can gather the clearest illustration of this branch of the subject; the sacred hymns, and songs, which they have left us, manifest that they enjoyed, in a great degree, the spiritual joys which flow from the love of God; that they knew the meaning and typical signification of all that apparatus which the church was subject to; and, particularly, that all these oblations, which consisted of the articles we have been considering, had respect to the spirit, grace, and gladness, of which the children of God were made partakers, and which they received through faith in the promised seed, the Son of God, to be born in due time.

The small portion of each of these, in all the offerings made by fire unto the Lord, was sufficient for instruction, commemoration, and representation. An ephah*, an hin, or the fourth part of an

* An epha, or bath, is a measure of capacity among the Jews,

hin, contained a quantity of as great use here, as if they had been tuns, or hogsheads; they instructed the worshipper, that God, a spirit, could not be gratified with such things, and that they ought not to build their happiness on them.

In the morning and evening service of each day they had a constant memento of the need of renewed grace to enable them to live on the bread of life; to shine in the beauty of holiness, and to rejoice in the hope of eternal joy. The divine Mediator, who officiated before God for their souls, was here illustriously represented. Their temple, their altars, their sacrifices, their oblations, all pointed out the certainty of his incarnation. These were established by an order from him who established the heavens and the earth. He gave positive, minute laws respecting them, which no inferior authority could abrogate: these continued in force till he who appointed them came. He came in the fulness of time, and having fulfilled all that was intended by them, set them aside as of no more use. We shall see all this, with fullest evidence, in his history, which we are now about to enter upon.

But a little improvement may yet be necessary

containing something more than seven wine gallons and four pints. An hin is one-sixth part of an epha, that is one gallon two pints. The fourth part of an hin is some little more than a pint.—The Bishop of Peterborough's Appendix, Table III. Butterworth's Concord. in verba.

as a conclusion to this and the preceding discourse. These sacrifices and oblations we have seen have a certainty and reality in them, which cannot be controverted; there is such wisdom in the contrivance of the whole as far surpasses human capacity: the wonderful fabric of the tabernacle, and the temple of Solomon, manifested a wisdom which the builders ascribe to him who built the fabric of the universe. Moses received a particular charge to make the first according to a pattern he had seen formed by the God of Israel himself in the holy mount. David was taught of God to draw the plan of the second, which his son Solomon was to build; and those, who had under them the chief direction of the work, were qualified with special abilities to finish it in the highest perfection. But in the system of sacrifices, we have a more noble display of the divine wisdom, far above any contrivance which could enter into the minds, either of the priest of Midian, or his exiled son-in-law; had they contrived such a scheme for the purpose of power and popularity as the deists, and other infidels (violent adversaries of divine revelation), would persuade the world to believe, the Hebrews in Egypt were the most unlikely to receive it, guarded by Pharoah, all his officers, and task-masters. The Arabians, their own neighbours and countrymen, were the most likely to receive and embrace them, and therefore why not proposed to them; but as the work was

above Jethro's contrivance, so it was also above the invention of Moses himself, who ascribed the whole of it to God, under whose authority and direction he acted. To which we may add the aversion which the Israelites had to the system itself, when proposed and offered to them, notwithstanding the manifestations of the divine power, which they had seen on the person of Pharaoh, and the whole nation of the Egyptians, to open a way for their deliverance; yet they constantly murmured against Moses, as deceiving and imposing on them; they rose in frequent rebellions against him; they opposed and resisted his authority, as if he acted in his own name, and only made a pretence of authority from the Lord. But this brought upon them many severe judgments, inflicted by the immediate hand of God. From the whole, therefore, we may be assured that Moses could not have supported his credit and influence over them, if the divine power had not defended him, and that these typical institutions could never have been established had they been only of human contrivance.

A carnal people, just come out of slavery, could not at once see the design of this system; their first business was to learn obedience to their ritual, and punctually to observe the devotions they were called to. They performed these with much the same dispositions they had brought out of Egypt; but growing in acquaintance with the signification

as well as with the service itself, they attended the altar, and presented their eucharistical oblations, in a way more becoming the object of their worship. Like children in the school of divine knowledge, they had all to learn; the glorious and great object held up, and preached by their sacrifices and offerings, was long at too great a distance to be seen by them; they wanted the prophecies to describe him; the picture drawn in blood they could not comprehend without them; hence Moses, taught of God, gives them the information wanted, and exhibits the Son of God in the promises made to Adam, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; illustrating to them the certainty of his incarnation, the offices he should sustain, and the infinite grace he should bestow.

The goodness and mercy of God to these people were as evidently manifested in these, as his wisdom in their contrivance, or his power in delivering them from bondage in Egypt, and establishing them against their infidelity. If they were in themselves the most unworthy of such mercies, as it is certain they were, they rendered themselves much more so by their repeated rebellions; goodness and mercy however followed them, and therefore they were not consumed.

The constant trouble, and continual perils, to which this good man was exposed, through the perversity of those he had to do with, were such as must have sunk the spirits of any who sought his

own glory, and not the glory of God; and nothing is clearer in the whole history of his conduct than that impartiality of his intentions, which he professed on every occasion; he did not establish his own power, nor settle a succession of it in his family, contrary to the practice of all successful usurpers; he seems constantly to have on his mind the honour of the supreme Being, and the good of those tribes which were committed to his care: when he finished his course, he put the reins of government into the hands of his servant, rather than his son, in obedience to the divine will; the priesthood was the only settlement he left finished, which was not in his own family, but in his brother's: in short, he left neither power, nor affluence, nor honour, to his own posterity; which we may expect he would have done, had he acted according to his own will.

If his disinterestedness appear in these civil transactions, much more in those of a divine and religious nature; their purity and holiness; their spirituality, and manifest relation to better things of a heavenly nature, prove them to be of a divine origin; and that Moses could neither add nor diminish in the institution of them: if we consult these things themselves, and look into their nature and constitution, we shall see that they illustrate a divine benevolence, such as is not to be found in the compass of creation; here we see atonement provided for offence committed by the offended

party; so that what his law demands, his mercy supplies; what satisfaction his justice requires for the offence of a guilty creature, his munificence gives freely: this is more than common beneficence, such as may be exercised among needy dependent creatures by royal favour: it is the loving-kindness of the Supreme, far surpassing in nature and effects any thing that can enter into the human mind.

Most certainly, this was an instructive system, as it led the mind to contemplate the moral perfections of the only wise, powerful, and blessed God, whose hatred of sin they must see written in characters of blood, and whose love of virtue was equally plain in all the ointments and perfumes prescribed by their law; that any thing symbolical or typical, was seen in the sacrifices and oblations; or that they had any tendency to convey such instructions as had respect to better things in a future period, may be questioned; they were institutions of divine service, which had a constant respect to the worship and homage due to the divine Being, and set forth the obligations incumbent on his chosen people to love and obey him; but they could not, without an interpreter, inform them who or what was represented or typified. But to supply this defect, the prophets were appointed to this office; it was their province to teach the church, that the Son of God, and the consequences of his incarnation, were hereby repre-

sented; that their suffering victims typified his sorrows for sin; that their smoaking, flaming incense, was a symbol of the acceptance of his atoning sacrifice; and that the precious liquids used in their grateful oblations were emblematic of the invaluable blessings of his grace, to be communicated by his divine Spirit on all who worship him in spirit and in truth.

The priests who attended the altar, received from these interpreters that evangelical knowledge of their nature and signification, which they also communicated to the people; Moses being a prophet, instructed Aaron thus to explain their meaning; and so every succeeding prophet taught the officiating priest; thus the design of these bleeding, burning, savoury, but burthensome, ceremonies was kept in view throughout the whole dispensation; on which we may well suppose, that as the knowledge of this was cultivated and improved by the united and pious labours of the prophets and priests; so faith and piety would prosper; as the promised Redeemer was pointed out and relied on, so would the true worship of God be promoted, and the persons and property of the people be in safety; the blessing of Abraham, the promised Messiah, was the hope of Israel; and therefore they sacrificed and offered in the assurance of his manifestation in the flesh, and hoped for acceptance with God and eternal life through this alone; on any other ground their services were

nugatory, as we have before said; and all their religious parade an empty show.

But it may be asked; What are all these things to us Christians? much, many ways; chiefly, because we have in them certain marks, by which to know who the person intended is, when he appears; when we compare the painting with the original, we see the exact resemblance, and are satisfied that this, and none else, is He; we have, in the prophecies, the history of a certain Great One to come; in the sacrifices, we have his picture; the former describes who and what he is; the latter is a delineation of his person: by laying both together, we make an enquiry at the time when—after the manner how—and into the circumstances with which he makes his advent: finding him, in whom all the description and delineation exactly agree, we have the strongest confirmation that reason, not to say sensible demonstration, can give us. We can then say, with the fullest assurance, that which we have heard—which we have seen with our eyes—which we have looked upon, or examined—and our hands have handled, declare we unto you, 1 John i. 1, 2.

INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Having conversed so long with Moses and the prophets, and heard their united testimony through

so many generations, attested with so much evidence of truth in the presence of all mankind, concerning that divine Person, who only could be the Saviour of the world; and having seen so many marks pointed out by them which should clearly distinguish him from every other, we now turn our attention towards that blessed and only Potentate, the history of whose incarnation, life, doctrine, miracles, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven and eternal glory, is distinctly written in the New Testament; it is here we have the proof we are illustrating with the fullest evidence; nothing is wanting to satisfy the most scrupulous enquiries; we have here an history of plain matter of fact, which even the enemies of Christianity have never dared to controvert; it is not the history of Jesus Christ they attack, but the consequences which his disciples draw from it; and hereby we see the deep ignorance, if not horrid malignity, of his enemies; they surely never have candidly examined the external and internal evidence with which it is supported; all the marks that distinguish an history worthy of public attention attend this; the narration is clear and just; the facts stated with propriety and fidelity; laid distinctly before the world in the face of avowed and threatening opposition; against which an appeal is made to reason and conscience: it comes forward in the most open and explicit manner, demanding investigation: its intrinsic purity, and

unsullied veracity, stand forth with heroic boldness, and in the meekest majesty; it states the living actions of Emmanuel; the motives and designs of his conduct, in relation to God and man; it exhibits the highest glory of the eternal Supreme, and promotes the happiness of mankind to the utmost perfection; it is indisputably the most excellent pattern of all moral virtue.

We are about to look into an history infinitely more noble than any that ever appeared on the stage of the world; the great characters, the conquerors of the earth fall prostrate before him, who, after he had conquered the devil, and destroyed the strong forts of superstition and idolatry, could proclaim liberty to captive souls, and take them under his divine protection, assuring them of eternal felicity in his kingdom and glory, on the easy terms of submitting to him the only begotten of the Father, and bearing the light yoke of those institutions which he inculcated.

What are the high sounding exploits of the founders of mighty empires, who cemented their schemes of universal dominion with the blood of their opponents, when set in contrast with the joyful sound of salvation to sinners, by a medium consistent with the infinite perfections of Deity, and his moral government of rational creatures?

What is the name of the proud founder of the Babylonian empire, when compared with the

name of the meek and lowly Jesus? The one sinks in infamy, while the other rises in renown.

What is the great, magnanimous, and prudent Cyrus, when placed in competition with Christ the anointed of the Lord?

What is Alexander of Macedon, that mighty destroyer of his race, for his speed in conquering nations, when considered with him who is, by nature, A STRONG HELPER; and with equal facility subdues nations from the rising to the setting sun. This monster of madness fell a prey to his own debaucheries; but the Son of Man was meek and lowly of heart; holy, harmless, undefiled?

What is Julius Cæsar, or his nephew Augustus, who laid the foundation of the Roman empire, for all the excellencies which shine in their characters, when we view them standing beside him, in whom dwells the fulness of the godhead bodily?

These great geniuses are weak; their actions are childish, wanton, and wicked; and their pursuits are ignoble, in comparison of the Child born, and the Son given, of whom the prophet speaks. It is only the pen of inspiration that can do justice to his character; and, accordingly, his historians were guided by the impartial, faithful, unerring spirit of truth, in the records they have given of him; it is on this ground worthy to live, when these are lost in total oblivion; and it shall live.

while a poor miserable son of Adam is able to read and receive any benefit from it.

We mean not to insinuate any thing disrespectful, or unbecoming, of those civil histories, which have been handed down to posterity from the most ancient times; their utility to mankind is too obvious; and, therefore, they are deservedly raised in the esteem of the wise and judicious; their reputation for political and moral purposes is so well established, that he may well be suspected of misanthropy, who would attempt to destroy them; but the best of them are only human compositions, exhibiting a mixture of good and evil, of virtues and vices, which do not admit of that perfection of character, which we shall find in the history before us; these have no relation, nor claim to divinity; this, indisputably, has; and the difference between them is as great, as that between the mild, prudent, wise, magnanimous actions of a good and holy man, and those of wild, voracious, devouring beasts of the desert; to which the four great monarchies, the founders of which we have named, are compared.

These, however ostentatious and powerful, and permitted of the Almighty to arise on each other, are without doubt under the influence of the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that ruleth in the children of disobedience. Their political or state maxims had each a different aspect from the other, as distinct and observable,

as the difference between gold, silver, brass, and iron, or clay itself. Which may intimate, that they degenerated rather than advanced in improvements; they descended into the more gross pollutions of sin, rather than arose by contemplation to those high intellectual entertainments, which were congenial to the wants and wishes of the soul.

But, here, we have a history of a very different nature, which richly deserves to be built on the ruins of these. If they attack and oppose it, they ruin themselves; and we aver, it is not in the nature of this to oppose what is valuable in these. And here is every thing that is excellent, or that can ennoble and invigorate the mind. We see no low pursuits, or partial, selfish interests; all has a tendency to the general good of mankind, and to their immortal felicity, who act according to the dictates and examples laid down.

It is an undeniable proof of the excellency of this history, that ever since it was published in the world, it has been the platform of innumerable others. Like the divine person whom it describes, it stands unrivalled: nothing like it ever arose in the preceding ages, nor has the succeeding ever produced any thing similar. It arose in the darkest ages of superstition, and religious ignorance, amidst the highest improvements of the sciences, in a generation when the expectation of some great event was raised to the highest pitch; which, too, might be the occasion of carrying away the public atten-

tion, from the real person so long expected. The history of the Saviour of the world did not appear while he was an inhabitant of it; but without it, the world could not have been much benefited by his incarnation. It, therefore, became indispensably necessary, that the uncertainty and mischiefs of tradition might be prevented, and that the world might have a certain rule to act by, such as it could depend on for truth and veracity.

Here it unites with the Old Testament, which begins with the origin of things, and proceeds with the history of the church in a regular chain, till very near the time when the New Testament begins. Moses wrote of Christ, as well as the holy evangelists and apostles; and what the Old Testament foretels, by way of setting forth this divine object, the New describes in the most artless and plain manner, in the narrations of the holy and righteous life of Jesus Christ. Herein, then, we have a history of the greatest importance to all mankind. It brings to light life and immortality; it directs our feet into the way of peace. This light ought to shine over the whole universe, into every nation, kindred, tongue and people. Let its instructions be conveyed to every sovereign, statesman, counsellor, and captain, who will find their account in imitating the heroism here exhibited. It is, thank God, the property of the poor as well as the rich: here are consolations, and spiritual entertainments afforded unto all; and blessed are

they who bow down to the authority, and submit cheerfully to the institutions of the King of Kings. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this history, and keep those things that are written therein.

It may not be improper here, to take notice of some providential circumstances, which have an immediate relation to the subject we have in view; these, however little attended to, by the great body of professing Christians, are, notwithstanding, of great importance here, as they manifest a superintending government in the world, over the affairs of nations which paid no attention to, nor regarded any such things. Out of many of less importance, (if any circumstance connected with this great event, can admit of the idea), we would point out the three following:—the universal peace which all nations enjoyed, when the Prince of Peace was born; that decree of a general taxation, which ordered every person to be enrolled for this purpose, and which brought him to be born in Bethlehem; the high state of literary and political improvement in every part of the world, which so evidently paved the way for the fullest investigation of the reality and truth of his history. A short view of each of these, will satisfy us that a watchful agency of omnipotent wisdom, ordered all things well for the accomplishment of this first, greatest, unfathomable design—the manifestation of the Lord of life in human nature. Divine providence

in the world, as well as the divine Spirit in the church, restrains, directs, and appoints all public and private affairs, to unite in the place, and centre in this divine Person.

Our first observation is, that all the earth enjoyed peace, when the Prince of Peace was born. Wars, the fruit and punishment of sin, had been carried from one nation to another, without intermission, for many generations. The Romans after their conquest of Carthage, became bolder in their depredations of other countries, and extended their dominions over all Europe, and brought under their iron feet, the richest countries in Asia and Africa. Whilst they subdued a barbarous spirit, uncultivated by any arts but those of war, and made these countries dependent on their power, they taught them the milder arts of peace, and how to live by civil laws and their own industry.

Through a course of many generations, they had but few intervals of peace, and some of these of very short duration. To intimate either peace or war, they had a temple in their city, whose massive gates were shut in time of peace, and were never opened but in war, and then were never shut; so that the opening or shutting of these doors, was to the inhabitants of Rome, and to the empire at large, tantamount to a proclamation. The meaning, we suppose, of this sacred edifice being always open, in the time of bloodshed, was to afford a refuge to all, or to any one, who might flee thither for his

life. It might be to the Roman, what the horns of the altar were to the Jew in times of public calamity.

This temple was built by Numa Pompilius the second king of Rome, and was dedicated by him to Janus, the first king of Italy, who became one of their gods. After it was finished, it remained shut all the reign of its founder, but was opened by his successor Tullus Hostilius, and stood open 437 years. It had been shut only five times from the first building of Rome, to the time we are speaking of. The first time was in the reign of Numa; the second, after the first war with the Carthagineans; the third, when Augustus conquered Mark Anthony in the battle of Actium, after it had stood open 205 years, 29 before the birth of Christ; the fourth time, four years after, when he had subdued the Cantabrians in Spain; the fifth time was in the year when our blessed Lord was born. There was now a general peace over all the world, and it continued for twelve years together. Here, observe, the Prince of Peace, the Desire of all Nations, by his divine Providence making peace on earth among nations, when he comes to make peace between God and man; he orders them to lay down the weapons of death, and to bury their animosities, when he takes upon him human nature, that he may die for them and destroy their sin; the evil, infernal spirits, who well knew him, and the design of his

advent; and whose reign was universal, and, hitherto, unrestrained, must now give up their hellish plots when he approaches. It is highly incongruous, that men should fight and devour one another, when the God of Peace comes to establish peace on earth, and to bruise Satan and put him under their feet.

We take notice, secondly, of that providential circumstance which brought this divine person to the place of his birth. It was an affair which respected all nations, as well as the peace which we have seen them in possession of. The wisdom of God could have devised numberless ways to have accomplished this; but he chose to use the sole monarch of the world for this purpose, and in consequence of his decree, of which the sacred historian gives us an account, the Lord of glory was brought forth in Bethlehem. This decree came from Rome, three years before our Saviour's birth; the motive which gave rise to it, was, to ascertain the strength of the empire, both as to population and property. Augustus, therefore, issued out a decree to make a description, or a survey of the whole; every persons name was to be enrolled, and his estate to be taxed, according to its valuation. This was the occasion of Joseph and Mary his wife, coming to the city of David, to which they belonged; they were of the house and lineage of David. This was the metropolis of the tribe of Judah, as Jerusalem was of Benjamin. It

was the royal city though now decayed, as the other was the holy city. A decree from the metropolis of the world, brings the Saviour of the world to the house of his glory. This imperial order had no such design in view, nor could this greatest of men have any such thing in contemplation, even though he had seen the prophecy of his coming, and known the place of his birth. This was a circumstance, known, only, to the all-wise Governor of the universe, who ordered it for reasons, which we may conjecture, but cannot fathom *.

Leaving speculations, therefore, we may, with pious affections, admire the union of grace and providence in this remarkable circumstance. See! how providence acts, as it were, the part of a handmaid to those purposes of grace, which are given us in Christ Jesus. Neither Joseph, nor the blessed mother of the holy child, would ever have thought of going a journey of about sixty miles, to the royal city of David, to accomplish the pro-

* It is worth observation here, that this decree was never fully executed; as if God in his providence meant it only to bring about this great event. It did not proceed much farther than to this country nor much longer than to this period. And the Roman historians assure us that there never was a taxation made upon it. And that the enrolment made at this time found some centuries after, contained the names of Joseph and Mary, who were now at Bethlehem. This is a certain attestation of the truth of the nativity of our blessed Lord and Saviour recorded by the enemies of Christianity. Charnock's Disc. on Provid. Page 44.

phecy, or fulfil the Scriptures, concerning the birth-place of the Messiah; and, more especially, as she had, in all probability, passed through or near the place not three months before, on her return from the house of her cousin Elizabeth, in Hebron, twenty-four miles south of Bethlehem, to Nazareth on the north. Beside, this prophecy might not occur to them, or be so fully in their minds, as to secure the accomplishment of it; and through their inadvertency the Messiah might be born of a virgin, indeed, but not in his place. Therefore,

Divine providence at Rome, presiding over the person and counsels of the emperor, shall send them an order to attend at the place fixed in the divine counsels, which they shall not neglect obedience to; that the unspeakable grace of God may spring up here, and flow with greater influence and sweetness than the waters of the well which David of old so much longed for. 2 Sam. xxiii. 15, 1 Chron. xi. 17.

Our third remark is, the high state of literary and political improvement which prevailed in every part of the world. It was now that Rome, and Athens, and Egypt, were enriched with all the treasures of philosophy. The holy city itself was not a stranger to the embellishments of art: greater men never arose in any age. Rome was filled with the ablest politicians; Athens with the wisest philosophers; Egypt with the greatest mathematicians; and Jerusalem with the most apparent sanc-

tity; hence, in the nature of things, it was next to impossible that any imposter should succeed in his attempts upon mankind; the human mind was so well informed on every branch of useful knowledge, that could contribute to the happiness of human society, that a mere pretender could have no chance; and he must bring the clearest vouchers for the truth and utility of his pretensions, who could at all gain a hearing.

One great mean of such improvements, we may well suppose, was the care and industry of the kings of Egypt, who for several ages were the patrons of all sorts of learning; they collected an immense library, out of all nations and languages, and encouraged men of every country to study the sciences there. The Jews were particularly honoured by these kings of the south; and by their means the ancient prophecies of the nativity of the Son of God became known to all the Gentile world. Ptolemy Philadelphus, in the seventh year of his reign, two hundred and seventy-eight years before Christ, procured a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into the Greek language, which was then generally spoken all over Asia. These Greek Scriptures are called the Septuagint, because they were translated by seventy Jewish interpreters, sent from Jerusalem to Alexandria for this purpose. The Jews here, who were very numerous, as well as those in the Holy Land, dispersed copies of these through all the cities of Asia, where there were Jews residing,

or synagogues built. Hence the Gentiles became acquainted with the holy Scriptures by means of the Jews; and the Hellenistic Jews received a translation of them by the means of the king of Egypt.

Thus we see that the knowledge of that divine Person, whose history we are about to illustrate, was providentially and gradually spread about; so that, when he was really manifested, the world might see the proof of it in all the ancient predictions concerning him, and the certain accomplishment of these in his history.

If these things be so it may be asked; Why did not this divine Person meet with general acceptance as soon as he appeared in the world? It is answered, because idolatry and superstition increased, as the arts and sciences improved; and these were directly contrary to the worship of the one true God; from these, immoralities of every sort sprung; and even those vices of the mind, and abominations of the flesh, which are hateful and pernicious to God and man, were supported with a religious veneration; drunkenness and lust became a part of their devotions; and we may well suppose, that any attempt to reform them, even by a divine power, would meet with opposition; therefore the person of Christ, however amiable, was exposed to persecution; and his doctrine, by the Greeks, was counted foolishness.

As to religion and morality, the Jews differed

little from the Gentiles at this important period; they were more refined in outward ceremonies, and more supercilious in their devotions; but their motives and views of things were equally carnal and unworthy. It was therefore, upon the whole, a generation unspeakably impious and profane; to such a degree, that a character so superlatively good must expect the basest treatment; and accordingly the life and doctrine of Christ was a cause of offence to the Jews; wherefore they persecuted him in the most outrageous manner, even to death.

Notwithstanding he was thus most cruelly treated by his own countrymen, it does not follow that he was what his murderers would have the world believe him to be; the innocency of his life and doctrine, the unlimited benefits which he bestowed on every needy object who came in his way; and his submissive obedience to the laws of the state, both civil and religious, are sufficient evidences that he was no deceiver; to which we must add his resurrection from the dead on the third day. All these things being laid together, afford more than a human testimony in his favour, and ought to satisfy our enquiries concerning his divine mission, and the truth of his history.

Of the authenticity of this history we have the testimony of the Jews themselves, through all preceding ages unto this day; if no such person ever had appeared, it was their duty to have pre-

vented any such accouuts from going into the world; and by all means to have exposed the falsehood of such fabulous stories, and thus to guard mankind against the cheat: on the contrary, they acknowledge that Jesus Christ lived and died in the manner related; and their children, to this day, justify what their fathers did in relation to him: their own historian Josephus bears an honourable testimony, both to Christ and his forerunner John the Baptist: and none of that people have ever contradicted the being, or the actions, of Jesus Christ*.

Besides it is a duty these people owe to themselves, as well as to the world at large, to overthrow the credit of this history if it be not founded in truth; it is here we learn most clearly the true character of a barbarous cruel generation: it holds out to all generations, a nation opposing and fighting against God; that very God whom their fathers worshipped; whose mercy promised they were now treading under their feet: in the Person they so unmercifully persecuted, they had the brightest mirror of that piety and holiness which their Scriptures represented and inculcated: supposing he had not been the person so long foretold, it was inhuman to treat any innocent, yea, even an imperfect, character in this manner: it is therefore incumbent upon them to prove, for the sake of their own reputation, that the history of Jesus

* Josephus Antiq. lib. XVIII. c. 7. 45 cap.

Christ is false; and that they treated him justly in pursuing him to death. But as they never have been able to do this, nor to retrieve themselves from the scandal of such barbarity, they must remain under the weight of injured innocence, till it pleases God to bring them to repentance, and to forgive their sins: being the objects of pity Christians ought to pray, that the Jews may be enlightened to see their sin in crucifying their promised Messiah, and with penitent hearts may embrace him, as he is revealed in the history of the New Testament.

DISCOURSE VII.

The Advent of the Son of God.

THIRDLY, HIS HISTORY.

Whilst we behold the Eternal bowing the heavens, and descending, it becomes us to prostrate our souls in the profoundest adoration and praise: when he comes down, the servants of his court attend his advent, and proclaim his approach: a sleeping dreaming world pay no attention to the august divine Personage, of whose coming they have heard; and although they now hear yet they regard not, because their ears are dull, and their eyes are heavy: their hearts are engrossed with earthly cares, and their fancies filled with worldly

pomp; so that there is no attention paid to those heavenly messengers who bring the glad tidings of great joy, and preach to a lost world that a Saviour is born.

We come to the history of this Saviour, which follows next in order, according to our proposed plan. This being the most important part of the work must be attended to with more particular care: what we relate of a divine person ought to be expressed as much as possible, in a manner suitable to the subject: we therefore proceed with reverence and humble dread, but with holy confidence, praying in the words of the poets:—

> "O thou, who from the solid darkness struck
> That spark the sun; strike wisdom from my soul,
> My soul which flies to thee, her trust, her treasure."
>
> YOUNG.

> "Thou, O Spirit! that dost prefer
> Before all temples th' upright heart and pure,
> Instruct me.
> What in me is dark illumine;
> What is low raise and support."
>
> MILTON.

We first observe the promised forerunner, whom we have heard described by the prophets: that herald, who should precede the coming of the Lord, and prepare his way; stiled by the some the morning star, arising before the sun of righteousness; John, the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth, born, as we are assured, out of due time, rises up and goes forth, in the spirit and power of Elias, to

reprove the impieties of the generation; to call them from the paths of delusion and error; to bring about a reformation in conduct and conversation; and as much as possible to make the house and people of God fit for his appearance among them. He was sent with an express message for this purpose, and therefore baptized his converts in the faith of the Messiah to come, now about to appear: he became very popular through the austerity of his manners, and fidelity of his preaching; bearing the most faithful testimony against the impieties of the times, and to the divine person who had sent him.

This great work to which he was appointed, was introduced by many important and remarkable circumstances; his father being a priest, and officiating in the routine of his office, whilst he was burning incense, and trimming the lamps in the holy place, the angel Gabriel, whose station in the court of glory is near the divine Majesty, was sent to assure him that he should have a son by his aged wife Elizabeth; and that he should be the last in order, but the first in capacity, in the legal dispensation; and that he should have the high honour of introducing the person and ministry of the Son of God to the church.

Whether from too great an attachment to the old economy which he might, with the generality of his countrymen, think to be immutable and everlasting; or from the weakness of false

modesty, a fault peculiar to many pious souls; or from diffidence of the divine veracity, in such a wonderful relation as he now heard; or perhaps from a mixture of all these at the same time, we will not determine: but requiring a sign to satisfy him of the certainty of the thing; the heavenly messenger assured him he should have one that should prevent him from hearing Moses* and the levitical law for the present, or speaking of the excellency of the ceremonial law, till this child should be born; a great part of whose work should be to supercede the old, and introduce that new establishment that should stand for ever.

We cannot help admiring here the wise and powerful agency of God in raising up such an extraordinary character: the Almighty begins to accomplish all the ancient predictions concerning his only begotten Son: he makes known his purposes to his holy servant; not at his own house at Hebron, the place of his ease and repose, but at the temple, the place of his public duty: not in a dream, or a nocturnal vision on his bed, but in a revelation open as the day; in the evening of the divine service; and in the presence

* It is asserted by many that Zachariah was deaf as well as dumb, that he could not hear any more than speak till John the Baptist was born; and from the original it seems plain that he was as unable to hear as he was to speak; for his friends were forced to make signs to him that he might understand them, Luke i. 22. 62. See Dr. Guise and Dr. Whitby, Paraphrase and Notes in loc.

of all the congregation; hereby preparing the minds of the people for those more remarkable discoveries which were about to open before them: this greatest of prophets, who, by the divine power, should be born of parents as good as dead, should be supported in the work assigned him by the same power. He should introduce the Redeemer to the church, and a Saviour to the world: the institutions of Moses must yield to the doctrine and discipline of Jesus Christ: his ministry was a voice proclaiming the approach of the Son of God: a trumpet sounding the advent of the King of Glory.

Messiah comes! Let us attend the manner of his advent; and with holy joy, and every expression of gratitude, show forth the praises of his divine Person. We shall attend to these three things, with which many others are connected: 1. His birth. 2. His private life. 3. His baptism. To see his glory we must draw aside the veil of poverty, and consider the wonderful circumstances which environ him on all sides.

1. The same heavenly messenger who had announced the supernatural birth of John was dispatched, six months after, to announce to a virgin of the family of David, that she should be the mother of the Messiah. She dwelt at Nazareth, a small city in the province of Galilee, about sixty miles north of Jerusalem, and not above twenty years of age; she was betrothed, or engaged for

marriage, to one of the same family, whose name was Joseph, and by occupation a carpenter: when the angel appeared to this pious and blessed maid, he wished her joy on the happy distinction to which she was now exalted; that in consequence of being so highly in favour with the Almighty she should be blessed above all the rest of her sex: she wondered what the meaning of such a salutation could be, and was greatly affected with it: but he told her not to be afraid, since she was in such favour with God, and assured her that she should conceive and bring a son into the world whom she must name JESUS; that he should be a great Saviour, the long expected Messiah, the Son of the Highest; who should be entitled to the throne of his father David, and should reign in his spiritual kingdom through all the periods of time, and to eternity.

Not comprehending the extent of the message, nor recollecting the express prophecies respecting the nativity of the Messiah, she expressed her wonder how she should be the mother of a son since she was a pure virgin. He answered her, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the SON OF GOD." To confirm her faith in this miraculous conception, he assured her that her near relation Elizabeth, who was in the nature of things incapable of conceiving

and bringing a child into the world, was now with child of a son, and should be a mother in three months; both which cases were equally within the operation of Omnipotence.

This discovery so engaged the attention of the happy virgin, that she, in a few days after, resolved to pay a visit to Elizabeth, and accordingly entered on a journey of above eighty miles, and we may well suppose alone and on foot. As soon as she entered the house of Zacharias, the Holy Spirit seemed to fill every heart; even the babe in Elizabeth's womb leaped for joy, under a sense of the present Son of God, who had now assumed humanity in the spotless virgin.

The blessed Mary staid here about three months, all the time employed in the most holy and heavenly exercises: when she returned, her pregnancy was fully ascertained; her espoused husband finding her in this situation before they had been publicly married, resolved not to marry her at all, and so to dissolve the connexion, and say no more of it; notwithstanding, the laws gave him power over her life; but while he was revolving these things in his troubled mind, a messenger from heaven informed him how the case stood; and told him that in Mary, his espoused wife, the prophecy of the seed of the woman should be fulfilled: and this was the completion of what the prophet foretold, saying, "Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his

name EMMANUEL, which being interpreted, is God with us." Then with joyful heart he became her husband, and took her under his protection.

We ought here to remark the wonderful providence of God, respecting the holy virgin and her blessed offspring; she was espoused for honourable marriage to one of her own tribe and family before the angel announced to her, that she should be the mother of him who was to be the blessing of all the families of the earth: in her espoused husband the honour of her character is secured, and her holy Child becomes the special object of his care.

Nearly six months after, Joseph and his wife Mary were summoned to the royal city of their tribe; notwithstanding the time of her delivery drew near they must both repair to Bethlehem: the political reason of this journey was to enrol their names in the public register of the empire, as descendants of the royal line of David; but the divine reason was to fulfil the Scripture respecting the birth of him whose goings forth have been of old from everlasting, according to the prophecy of Micah, given seven hundred and ten years before:—"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel."

They came to the appointed place but found no accommodation; every inn was filled with the concourse of people which the emperor's order had

collected together. They were therefore under the necessity of sheltering themselves under any roof, which could screen them from the heat of the day, or the damps of the night: the best lodging they could find was a stable for horses, or an hovel for cattle; a mean apartment truly; but perhaps thought good enough by the rich publicans, or their richer guests, for such poor people who had neither carriages for convenience, nor servants for attendants: if we may believe tradition, this stable was cut out of a rock on the east side of the city; a sufficient intimation, if true, that it was not the best accommodation even for cattle: but was not beneath the low estate of the handmaid of the Lord, nor too mean for the meek and lowly Son of God to take his first bed in*. In such a place the seed of the woman, who should bruise the head of the serpent, was brought forth: "And so it was that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered; and she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger."

This divine babe was conceived without sin, and therefore we may easily believe was born without pain; that he was the Son of God we have several proofs and illustrations, even at his birth; as from the angels who announced his being born to the shepherds; from the chorus of the multitude of the heavenly host; from the supernatural

* See Echard's Ecclesiastical Hist. book I. chap. 1. p. 47.

star which led the wise men to the place; from the offerings and worship they paid him; and also from the cruelty of Herod.

Here we are surrounded with a blaze of unspeakable over-whelming glories; see divine Revelation centering all its rays of celestial light on this sacred Infant! The prophesies and sacrifices which we have contemplated are here met to receive a full accomplishment and explication: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all holy patriarchs, with perhaps the Father of mankind at their head, attend the mean apartment where their Redeemer lies, and view him with joy: Moses followed by all the expositors of his law, those happy souls who foretold this wonderful event; they see with heart felicity their words are true: Aaron at the head of his glorified sons, here learn more fully what their ceremonial institutions meant: observe the sweet singer of Israel, David the anointed king, descending with his regular courses, and all their harps well tuned, to praise, to sing, the glories of incarnate Deity: yes wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. Thus the multitude of the heavenly host, with the angel (perhaps Gabriel) at their head, join in a sweet sublime anthem, the subject of which is GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, AND ON EARTH PEACE, GOOD WILL TOWARDS MEN.

Certain shepherds, who were at this hour of the night attending their flocks in the adjacent plains,

both saw and heard the celestial company; and being informed by one of them of the occasion of their visiting the regions of mortality and misery, were directed to go to the city, and make inquiry, and search there, till they found Joseph and Mary, and the Babe, lying in the manger: they went accordingly, and soon found the blessed happy family, and immediately reported what they had heard and seen all over the city and round the country; attesting that this Child was the Son of God, the promised Messiah.

At the same time, a star of a very uncommon nature appeared in the east, which excited the astonishment of all the nations which could take notice of it; it was visible to those countries where astronomy was cultivated, and they very properly judged that some most important matter was hereby portended; the ancient prophecy of Balaam, the tradition of which had not been wholly lost, concerning a star to arise out of Jacob, and a sceptre out of Israel, might now be generally recollected. Their learned men, doubtless, had access to the knowledge of this great subject by means of the translation of the Scriptures into the Greek language.

Hence these wise men, as they are generally called, were prepared by the universal expectation of some great person appearing; by the prophecies from the beginning of the world, particularly Balaam's, propagated among them for more than

fourteen centuries and a half; so that they were ready to follow this lamp from heaven, sent, purposely, to conduct them to the place of the nativity of the God of nature. They were led to the Holy Land, and made inquiries at the holy city.

Having learned here the place where the Messiah was to be born, they direct their course to Bethlehem; and as soon as they had left Jerusalem, the star appeared which they had seen in their own country, and led them to the house where the young child was: this was a matter of exceeding great joy to them. When they came into the divine presence, they fell down and worshipped, and presented such offerings as were expressive of their devotions, and suitable to the majesty of deity in humanity: gold, as a tribute to his royalty and kingly office; frankincense, expressive of his priesthood; and myrrh, which might respect his prophetic office, or the healing, saving influences of his doctrine *. Their divine services

* The ancients were of opinion that there was something mystical denoted in the presents made by the wise men at our Saviour's birth, when they presented him with gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh: gold, as to a king; frankincense, as to God; and myrrh, as to a man that must die and be buried. Vide Bingham's Antiq. lib. XXIII. chap. 2. sect. 5.

However, these presents might be of great use to the holy family in their journey to Egypt, to defray the expenses of it; to support them while there, and to bring them again to their own country.

being ended, they returned to their own country, highly satisfied that they had found the expected Saviour.

This memorable nativity took place in the year four thousand from the creation of the world, and the fall of man according Archbishop Usher, and other great chronologers; in the twenty second year of Augustus from his full establishment in the empire; in the beginning of the thirty seventh of Herod, in December, according to the most received opinion; though the vulgar computation does not begin till four years later: as it is not material to our present purpose, to find the year, the month, or the day; we shall follow the common account. Having so full certainty of this blessed event, which is a great subject of our faith and joy, we may, easily, lay aside all contention about the particular hour.

Herod had privately requested the eastern sages to inform him of the holy family, after they had found them; but being warned of God, they went into their own country another way: his evil intentions, which were known only to God, being hereby disappointed. He formed the most horrid, and diabolic scheme, that could arise in the human mind; it was, to destroy all the children in and about Bethlehem, under two years of age, thinking to include the holy child Jesus, and at once to overthrow all the prophecies; to destroy the Messiah; and secure the throne of David in his

own family. This we may consider as a proof from hell itself, of the divinity incarnate, which should destroy sin and deliver mankind. Therefore the devil raises up his great instrument to destroy, if possible, the only begotten of the Father, and to prevent the effects of his incarnation. So that hell is moved with fear, envy, and rage, while heaven triumphs with joy, at the birth of the Son of God.*

But to prevent the malice of devils and men, an angel is sent to Joseph to order him to go with the mother and the child into Egypt; both to escape the impending danger, and to fulfil those Scriptures which had respect to this. Accordingly he arose while it was yet dark, and entered upon a journey of above two hundred miles, and came into that very country, where Israel and the twelve tribes which sprung from him, had been strangers and bondmen for two hundred and fifteen years.

Previous to this order, they had paid all due obedience to the divine institutions of Moses, by circumcising the blessed child, and offering such things as they were able, according to the law. It was at this time that good old Simeon saw his

* The execution of this order was so nicely rigorous, that one of Herod's sons then at nurse, was also said to be slain in the number. Macrobius assures us, that Augustus the emperor, hearing of this, and his other cruelties to his own family, declared, that he had rather be Herod's hog than his son; for the religion of his nation was a security for swine, but no religion could be any security for his child. Echard's Eccl. Hist. vol. I. page 53.

Saviour in human nature, took him in his arms, and prayed to be dismissed from an evil world; likewise an aged prophetess named Anna, spake of him to all that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

2. Having pointed out the most remarkable circumstances attending the birth of the promised seed, we now proceed to view his private life. Here, indeed, we have but few materials: as he assumed the lowest state in society, and possessing in himself the fulness of the godhead bodily, he stood in no need of a public, or liberal education in the schools of the Rabbins: the principal thing we have to do here, is to contemplate his amazing condescension, deep humility, holy conversation, and universal piety. These, we may be assured, were exemplified in him in the highest degree, and in the most perfect manner. But to return.

We left the holy family on their way to Egypt. The Son of God not only takes upon him human nature, from the person, and is born in the place foretold, which is an act of unspeakable condescension; but he still descends lower if possible. He is not only brought forth in the holy land, as if to enjoy his own inheritance and patrimony; but he is carried out of it into the most profane of all countries, where idolatry of every species abounded, where the most contemptible animals, and the most nauseous vegetables, were the objects of religious worship; here he takes possession, as it were, of the promised heathen for his inheritance; "Behold

the Lord shall come into Egypt, and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence." Accordingly, he came into this idolatrous country; when indeed his presence could have nothing remarkable in it to any outward appearance, being only a blooming pleasing child; apparently the offspring of these poor travelling Jews. But he came hither to mark the truth of prophecy, and to ascertain the reality of his incarnation, and Messiahship; because it had been spoken of the Lord by the prophet, "When Israel was a child I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt."

They tarried here not above eighteen or twenty months; and were ordered by an heavenly messenger, to return into their own country, because the dangers which threatened the child's life were over; accordingly they returned, probably to Bethlehem with an intent to settle there; but finding the goverment they were to live under, would be, in all likelihood, little different from that they had fled from, they did not think it prudent to fix here, therefore they continued their journey to Nazareth, the place of their former residence. They dwelt here the remaining part of their time, till Jesus began his public ministry, and it occasioned him to be called, by way of reproach, a Nazarene, as the ancient prophecies had predicted, and the ancient typical persons had represented.

The circumstance respecting our blessed Saviour's nativity were very little, if at all known here.

Joseph began his business, and quietly followed it to his last. He went up every year with his wife and the holy child to Jerusalem at the feast of the passover: religiously performing the duties of the house of God, in obedience to the sacred and divine institutions which were by law established. Of the first ten years of his infancy, nothing particular i said, he is now as a tender plant, growing in his place, in a barren soil indeed, as to this world, but under the blessing of heaven, " He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."

The genealogy of our blessed Lord, is not to be forgotten in this part of our illustration. Here we have the most undeniable proof of the subject; his pedigree answers exactly with the prophecies; and we may observe a wonderful providence, in uniting all the links of this chain, through all generations. It was to ascertain the Messiah, that the tribe of Judah was so particular in their registers. It became equally necessary that the house of David should be exact herein; as it was for the house of Aaron, to ascertain and keep a regular account in their priesthood; that the regal and sacerdotal orders might be preserved entirely distinct, till they should be united in him who should be a priest upon his throne world without end.

It is true these two offices were frequently united in the same person after the Babylonish captivity; but this did not interrupt the ancient

registers, nor cause any disorder in their genealogies; and as this happened so very near the time we treat of, it might be, in providence, permitted to remind the church that the Messiah should be both a king and a priest; but it is equally true that the rulers and the body of the people never thought of such a priesthood, always dreaming of a worldly state, and that the promised Son of David should be a greater king than his father.

But that the Christian church might have a clear and full proof that Jesus Christ our Lord was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; it hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost to record a double genealogy of him; the first in the line of Solomon, from whom Joseph, his supposed legal father, came; the second from Nathan, another son of David, the progenitor of his blessed mother Mary. Matthew begins his history with the first of these, and from Abraham and David proves to the Jews that Jesus, the child born at Bethlehem, is the promised blessing to all the families of the earth, and the legal heir to the throne of his father; he therefore begins at David and descends to the birth of Christ in the regal line of kings, showing that Emmanuel, the virgin's child, is the last; but the most eminent of the whole race. Luke takes a different course for the information and satisfaction of the Gentiles, and begins the pedigree of Christ from Joseph, the husband of the blessed virgin, who was the daughter of Heli; conse-

quently Heli was Joseph's father-in-law, who, by his marriage with Mary, united the two genealogies or branches of David's family; *viz.* Solomon's and Nathan's, in the one person of his legal, and her natural son Jesus Christ: Luke ascends in another line than Matthew's, from Mary and her husband Joseph through all her progenitors till he comes to David; and so proceeds with an authentic catalogue to Adam himself, to whom the promise of the seed of the woman was first made: here we have historic as well as prophetic proof; and it is wonderful to observe how circumstantially, minutely, and harmoniously, all has been conducted to the completion of this great event; to the exaltation and aggrandisement of this most holy sacred Person; he is the last born heir of David's throne, descending from him in accomplishment of the predictions which he received; legally* in the royal line; in the right of his sup-

* These words, legal or lawful Father, when applied to the supposed Father of our Lord, stand opposed to the term natural, which might intimate that he was his real father according to the flesh; which cannot possibly be, if the prophecies concerning him be true. But of their veracity no doubt can be entertained by any, who soberly, candidly, and rationally consider them; Jesus Christ our Lord, though he was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; yet he was not the son of Joseph, but of Mary, his espoused wife: the Son of God espoused, or adopted Joseph, to be the protector of his infancy, and acknowledged him as a father in a legal point of view, and therefore was obedient to his will in all things as became a

posed, I may say, espoused and lawful father, entitled to all the honours and dignity of his Father's house; most certainly in the natural line; assuming the human nature of the seed of David, of the person of the blessed Mary, whose descent is clearly proved to be from the same distinguished origin.

When the blessed Jesus arrived at the twelfth year of his age, going up to Jerusalem to the passover, with his parents and other relations; he took an opportunity of showing who and what he was to the Sanhedrim; though they were astonished at the questions and answers which passed on the occasion, they took no farther notice of him. But now the true Shiloh appeared; because the sceptre departed from Judah this very year; the power of life and death was taken from the Jews by the Romans, as we have shown in a pre-

dutiful child; obeying his highly honoured mother as became an affectionate son. And certainly Joseph would have been his real natural father if the purposes of God, and the nature of things, could have permitted it; but we have shown sufficient grounds why this could not be in the preceding parts of this work. It is worthy of remark here, that the blessed virgin was legally espoused to Joseph before she was found with child of the Holy Ghost; divine Providence so ordering all the circumstances of this wonderous nativity, both for the honour of the laws of marriage, and ascertaining the legal and natural right of Jesus Christ to the throne of Israel.

See Stackhouses's History of the Bible, vol. II. p. 316, 317. Edmund Calamy's Sermons on Inspiration, sermon VI. p. 182.

ceding discourse*; certainly this circumstance of making the country a province of Rome ought to have made them look around them for their Messiah; he came to show himself, that they might know he was born; had they examined the pedigree, the parentage, and the birth of this precious Youth; they must have found that this was he of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write; but the divinity was vailed, and they could not see that this child was the Son given, the mighty God, foretold by Isaiah; the glory of Israel, the Saviour of the world.

His blessed mother, and her husband, having lost their most precious treasure, were in very great distress; but after three days search they found him in the temple, and he returned home with them, and with all filial affection followed their directions.

About this time, probably, he began to learn the use of tools in his supposed father's business: being what is generally termed poor people, they must be but in common circumstances; though entitled to reign, they were deprived of their honours through want of the means of maintaining them: but the honours that mortals pay to mortals were far beneath the ambition of the holy and heavenly family; and particularly the holy and just One, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and therefore he chose to associate in that

* Discourse II. p. 162.

rank of society to which he could be most serviceable: he chose to be the companion of mechanics, and to labour himself for his daily bread. Wonderful condescension in the man in whom the godhead dwelt!

There is no particular mention made of the holy Jesus through a course of eighteen years; his employment is hinted at indeed by the evangelists, and Justin Martyr says that his main business was to make ploughs and yokes, and other instruments of husbandry, for the use of his neighbours; after the death of his reputed father, who died about the twenty-sixth or twenty-seventh year of Jesus's age, he still followed the same employment till he began his public ministry, as we may learn from Mark, who tells us, that he was called the carpenter, as having the business by himself; as having followed the business himself; whereas in other places he is called the carpenter's son, by way of contempt; intimating that Joseph was then alive, and had the direction of the business, but that the execution of it depended on this his supposed son; we shall conclude this in the words of one of our best ecclesiastical historians:—

"This was the mean and obsure education of the blessed Jesus; who, instead of being taught in the most famous schools of the Rabbins, or brought up in the temple among the priests, was constrained to earn his bread by the labour of his body, and live under the circumstances of the

poorest servant and apprentice. Which was an instance of the most amazing condescension and benignity; and not only so, but of the most surprising wisdom and understanding: for he who was to guide and reform all mankind, and to be their example, thought fit to show them the most perfect instance of humiliation; and he who was to be the wonder, as well as the Saviour of the world, refused all assistances of human learning, that his knowledge and his works might be more manifestly and apparently the effects of a supernatural power*.

3. His baptism. In the twenty-sixth year of the blessed Jesus, John, the son of Zachariah, of whom we have before taken notice, began to preach; Luke informs us it was in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius. When Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, in the thirtieth and last jubilee of the Jews, says Archbishop Usher, this herald of the Son of God, who was a priest by birth, and the greatest of all the prophets, by an immediate commission from heaven, entered upon the actual administration of his office in the desarts of Judea, and about Jordan, accomplishing the two ancient prophecies of which we have before spoken; the first from Isaiah, and the other from Malachi: the royal prophet calls him the voice of one crying in the wilderness or desarts: he began in a solitary part of the country, where the inhabitants

* Echard's, vol. I. p. 67.

were few, in the southern parts of Judea, preaching in such a style and manner as if he had been a trumpet calling the people to meet their promised Messiah: Malachi calls him a messenger, or an angel, sent to prepare the way before the incarnate Redeemer; to turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make the people ready for his acceptance; and to remove every impediment that might obstruct his approach, or hinder the access of the penitent to his divine mercy. If the Baptist went up to the holy city to attend the solemnities of the great day of atonement, which is not improbable; he might there in this time of fasting and general humiliation receive orders to begin his work; and so open his commission as soon as he returned to Hebron, the place of his nativity: it is certain however that he began now to preach the glad tidings of a Saviour born, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

The blessed Jesus continued to follow his employment at Nazareth, while John was making progress in his ministry in the hill country of Judah and Benjamin; labouring much about the eastern parts towards the river Jordan, which runs from the great lake or sea of Galilee to the dead sea, called the lake of Aspaltitis, where Sodom and Gomorrah once stood; he was a powerful preacher, and a severe reprover of immorality, living in great austerity suitable to the sentiments which he inculcated; he acquired such power and

authority among the people, that many of them began to think he was the Messiah, notwithstanding he constantly assured them that he was not that person, but that he was his forerunner, sent to show them he was born, and ready to be manifested and made known among them.

This eminent reformer was foretold by the character of Elijah by way of comparison; because there should be so great a resemblance between them in person, ministry, and usefulness. After he had laboured with success three years and six months, the only begotton Son of God left his retirement, and now came forward to unite himself to those penitent proselytes, whom John had brought to repentance, and had been, by baptism, initiated into that evangelical kingdom, of which he was the king; he went from Nazareth to Bethabara, on the other side of Jordan, and for the first time, in all probability, had a personal interview with his messenger. The messenger of the covenant had never seen his servant the baptist; and we may suppose that John first came to the knowledge of his Master's person on his application for baptism; a very few words would satisfy this greatest of men that he was conversing with the great object of his faith, and the divine subject of all his ministrations; he could soon and sensibly discover the divine nature in the human, notwithstanding the poverty and meanness of the latter; therefore he modestly desired him to decline

that ceremony, as altogether unnecessary for him: but Jesus told him that it was as necessary for him to honour this divine institution, and to fulfil every part of it, as it was to officiate in the performance of it: then John performed his duty, and hereby opened the way for sanctifying that ordinance, which should be the means of sanctification to all believers.

As soon as Jesus and his servant John had come up from the river Jordan, when perhaps engaged in solemn prayer suitable to the important occasion, in the company of all who were present; a supernatural light came down from heaven, and centred on his sacred person; and in the midst of it a visible appearance of the Spirit of God, descending in a hovering gentle manner directly on his head, all which was accompanied with a voice from heaven, saying, THIS IS MY BELOVED SON IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED.

What wonders appear in this momentous transaction! Here heaven opens a second time; first at Bethlehem, at the birth of Jesus, when the heavenly hosts rejoiced in his incarnation; now at Jordan at his baptism, when the essential persons subsisting in the one eternal Deity, most gloriously manifest themselves, here the whole godhead is seen and heard.

The Father, the first in order, manifests his distinct personality, by declaring that of his only begotten Son incarnate, and tabernacling among

men, in whose person and undertaking for them he is highly satisfied; the Holy Ghost, the third in order, visibly manifests himself, and comes down, and distinguishes that man in whom the eternal LOGOS dwelt, baptizing him as it were, ordaining and setting him apart for the important work he was born to execute. He has here, the Father's approbation and appointment, and every qualification and assistance of the omnipotent eternal Spirit. What angels and men had heard of concerning a Trinity, they now behold exemplified in the fullest manner; the Father speaking, the Son hearing, and the Holy Ghost descending and resting upon the Son of Man; the eternal Son had spent nearly thirty years in the human nature in the deepest humiliation and poverty. Now he is about to manifest himself, and to execute the design of his incarnation; he is introduced to the church, and ushered into the world in this divine and public manner, that all may hear and know that he ONLY is the messenger sent to redeem mankind.

The glories of this day, beyond doubt, absorbed all that ever John and his numerous disciples had seen before. The friend of the bridegroom must greatly rejoice that now at length he had found him, and that such evident proofs of his divine mission attended him: he was now arrived at the summit of his wishes, he saw the anointed of the Father, the sacrifice for sin, which had been promised, and typified from the beginning of the world. He

knew of his birth, but till now had not seen his person; he had since he begun his ministry, gone before him as a voice, proclaiming, PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD. But now he must retire behind him, and give place to his superior dignity; his ministrations must gradually subside, and his chief joy shall be to hear the doctrine, and to see the miracles of his blessed Lord and Master.

We may finish this discourse in the words of the beloved disciple John: "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God. In this is manifested the love of God towards us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

"For God *so* loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."

DISCOURSE VII.

His Manifestation, or public Appearance.

THE blessed person whose birth, private life, and public baptism, have been treated of and illustrated in our last discourse, in this and some following is to be exhibited in his public ministrations, in which he proved himself to be a divine person, as well as manifested the divine authority under which he acted as man. If he really be the first, he cannot possibly be without the last; divinity and authority must inseparably go together. He acts, therefore, as God in his own name, exercising his wisdom, power, and goodness, in his own right, and according to his own will; but as man he receives and acts under a commission from his Father, to transact the great business of a mediation, between the divine and human natures, which both meet in his wonderful constitution, and shine in the most conspicuous manner on every proper occasion. As the eternal bosom-companion of his Father, who has just now declared him to be his well-beloved Son, he descends with his order, to execute the purposes of his love and mercy to miserable mankind; therefore his sacred humanity, fitted and taken into such an high and glorious union, is deservedly called the Son of God. These two

natures constitute but one person; and this is he in and by whose *manifestation* the Creator and his guilty creatures harmoniously meet. The Son of God then is become the son of man; and this man is emphatically the Son of God, even as a creature; begotten of God, born to God, devoted to his service, and to live with God, in the highest felicity and glory to all eternity.

This sacred man having all these things manifestly opened to his mind, and feeling their full effect at his baptism, was disposed to retire from public appearance for a time, to improve these happy views, and to contemplate the glories which now took up his whole attention: and also to survey the work he had before him, to ponder all its parts, and to prepare himself for the performance of it. He was led of the Spirit, we are told, into the wilderness: having had such divine manifestations, he was now qualified to engage in that very necessary and preliminary part of his work; that is, to attack the enemy of souls in person, and to break that malicious sting in the old serpent's lying tongue, by which he had destroyed all the comforts of mankind, and poisoned the whole frame of nature.

In this place of retirement, wherever it was, the Son of God met the adversary: he fasted forty days and forty nights, as Moses and Elias did; and it is not improbable in the same wilderness, where were wild beasts, as Mark observes. The

dreary desart was a suitable situation to the disposition and designs of the devil; and as soon as the blessed Emmanuel made his appearance, he was attacked by him. The tempter, we may suppose, assaulted him for a considerable time in an invisible manner; afflicting his most holy and pure imagination, with ideas directly opposite to his sinless and unspotted mind; perhaps representing the Scriptures as a fable, a romance of human contrivance; that the representations which they hold out respecting sin, and the necessity of satisfaction, were all false: the prophecies carried on by different men through different ages, were lies, which imposed on the credulous and unwary; that as to a Messiah, so much talked of, there was no expectation to be entertained concerning him; and the enemy might urge it upon Jesus, that of all creatures he could not be the person, even supposing the truth of the prophecies; it was an act of the highest presumption, that one so poor, so mean, so despised, so much like a vagabond, cast out as the scum of society, and more like a maniac than a man of sense, should admit the thought of being him.

After the devil had privately tried all his skill, to shake and overthrow the faith of Jesus, near the end of the forty days he might be permitted to assume a visible human appearance; because he conversed freely with him, and acted in a personal capacity, as one who came accidentally going

through the desert and met with this stranger. Knowing with certainty, however, who he was, and recollecting the divine character given of him by the voice from heaven at his baptism, he addresses the blessed Jesus on this, calling in question even the truth of that declaration; insinuating, that he might not be the person intended; and therefore, as if he interested himself in his welfare, advises him to put his divinity to the proof, by converting some stones, which lay before them into bread, for the supply of his present necessities: but Jesus told him, that such an act would proceed from a distrust of that providence which supports the life of man; not by bread only, but by any other means which divine wisdom might appoint for that end; therefore it is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Though the blessed Saviour well knew who he had in his company, yet did not reject a proposal to visit the holy city; here his pretended friend had a deep scheme in view, which was, if possible, to make him his own destroyer; but, this he did not discover till he had brought him to the top of the temple, to which he might invite him to take a view of the city. Having ascended by the common way they came to the highest battlement, and there might sit down to look about them; now said the devil, you have a very fair opportunity of proving your divinity. If you be the Son of God,

cast yourself down from hence, because it is written of the Messiah, " He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, so that thou shalt not hurt thy foot against a stone." But Jesus repelled this audacious assault by answering, it is written again, " Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

The cunning artful devil, notwithstanding he could gain no advantage, yet made one proposal more; seemingly, for the entertainment of his companion in travel, which was to take a walk to the summit of one of the highest adjacent mountains as if to view the country as well as the city. When they arrived here, he intended now once for all, to exhibit all his power, greatness, and splendor, before this seemingly melancholy man.

Having arrived at the summit proposed, the god of this world displayed all his glories, and exhibited a plan of all his dominions, and gave such a description of their magnificent palaces, splendid courts, numerous armies, and incalculable riches, as were sufficient to attach any heart that had the least degree of worldly ambition in it.* Now, said he to Jesus, all these shall be at your disposal, only on the small condition, of falling down and worshipping me. This proposal roused the insulted divinity of the incarnate God, and he ordered the

* By his angelic power, he might exhibit a scheme of the whole as if drawn upon a map, and lay it before him for examination.

blasphemer instantly to depart from him; saying, for it is written, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*.

The blessed Jesus being now left to himself, and freed from the molestations of this troublesome, designing enemy, whom he had overcome in every attempt, a company of angels came to congratulate him on his victory, and administer to him further encouragement, together with present refreshment.

After the severe conflicts of his temptation were over, he went, in all probability, to Bethabara, where John was still preaching; here he first began his public ministry: the Baptist directed the atten-

* The view here given of the mode of temptation, appears to me much more natural and rational, than that of carrying the body of Jesus through the air, to the loftiest part of the temple, and from thence again, to the highest mountain. I see no necessity in the nature of the thing, for such satanic influence, and the holy evangelists give no ground for any such supposition; but the human form, which the devil might at this time be permitted to assume, was, naturally, adapted to the purposes of the tempter. Here he might assume different characters, as of friendship, condolence, reproving, dictating, reviling, reproaching, insinuating, and every way to gain his point, which was to overthrow the design of the incarnation. His impertinent interference was pushed forward with all malicious speed; and having as he presumed, got the ascendency over a poor, dejected, forlorn wanderer, might easily persuade him to go to the holy city, and so to the holy temple; all the way they went, he might particularly rally him, on his being called the Son of God, and therefore so often challenged him to a proof of it.

tion of the people to him, and assured them he was the long predicted Lamb of God, who came to take away the sins of the world; and pointed him out to two of his disciples the next day, as he was walking by himself in the same character; they followed him, and went with him to his house, and staid some hours in his company. They were soon satisfied in the truth of his Messiahship, and instantly made it known to others of their particular friends; Andrew was one of the two, and it is supposed John was the other, whose modesty would not permit him to name himself in this part of his relation; Andrew went and brought his brother Peter to Jesus, who affectionately received him, and named him Cephas, intimating to him the use he should make of him in the following part of his ministry, and that he should be a firm and faithful servant to him for the whole of his life; which accordingly happened with only one exception. Jesus went the next day into Galilee, and meeting with Philip commanded him to follow him; and Philip finding Nathanael, told him that the Messiah had made his appearance, and that Jesus of Nazareth was the person; this good man could not believe that any good thing could come out of a place so noted for impiety, and not being mentioned by the prophets; but being importuned to go with him to Jesus, and be satisfied for himself, he went; and was no sooner within the reach of hearing his voice than he found

himself in the presence of the omniscient God: for Jesus, after he had given him his just character as a sincere and pious Israelite, assured him that he was present with him when he was engaged in his devotions under the fig-tree, before Philip met with him; on which he publicly acknowledged him to be the Son of God, the Messiah, the King of Israel.

On the third day, after he had taken his leave of John at Bethabara, he with the disciples whom he had called, accompanied his mother to Cana to a marriage, perhaps of a relation, to which they all had been invited. It was here he first manifested his divine power in a miraculous way, by converting the water put into six water-pots into excellent wine: by this he confirmed the faith of his disciples, and administered a very handsome present to the young people, whose honourable connexion he dignified with his presence: afterwards he went to Capernaum with his mother and disciples, and continued there till the passover at Jerusalem, which was just at hand.

Thus we see our blessed Lord coming forward in his public manifestation, when he had accomplished the thirtieth year of his life, the time appointed by the law for the priests to enter upon their public functions at the temple: having spent about a fortnight, or three weeks, in the metropolis of Galilee, he set out on his journey to the holy city, where he was more fully to open his commis-

sion, and to prove, beyond all reasonable contradiction, that truly he was the Son of God, the promised Saviour of the world. This was the fittest time for this most important of all events, when the whole church was to be assembled in one place at this annual festival, being, according to Echard, the sixth day of our month April, and the sixteenth year of the reign of Tiberius the emperor, and about three months after his baptism. As he attended four passovers, we shall make each a separate division according to the time, and illustrate the most remarkable actions intervening.

THE FIRST PASSOVER.

Our blessed Lord having arrived at Jerusalem with his disciples, went up into the temple. He manifested his divine authority, and cleansed his house of that impurity with which it was wholly defiled. The outer court, which was appointed for the Gentiles to worship in, was now become a public market-place for oxen, sheep, and doves, and such articles as were required at the temple. Nor was this all; it was converted into an exchange, for the purposes of covetousness and extortion: foreigners, who came from distant countries to worship, brought the currency of their states to be exchanged here, that they might buy sacrifices for the altar, and other things needful: this custom, like other innovations, grew from less to more, till it became intolerable: Jesus seeing

the extent of this traffic, his holy soul rose in detestation of it: he took up some small cords which were lying about, and having twisted, or plaited them together, he began at the higher end of the court, and drove all the cattle before him, overturning all the tables of the money-changers that came in his way, ordering them to remove every thing out of his Father's house, which was appointed for the purposes of prayer and divine worship only: his disciples, who were probably astonished spectators of their divine Master in this work, recollected that David, by the spirit of prophecy, had spoken of this very thing, and the spirit by which it was done, as the characteristic of the Messiah, Psalm lxix. 9.

But the Jews required a further proof of his authority for acting in this manner; on which he gave them prophetic proof, arising out of the ancient prophecies of the Messiah respecting his own death, which only could cleanse the more polluted temple of human nature, and which he came into the world to accomplish; but they did not then comprehend the meaning of what they now heard, any more than of what they had seen performed: he did some other miracles which are not recorded, on account of which many believed in his name.

While he tarried at Jerusalem, a ruler of some note of the sect of the Pharisees, whose name was Nicodemus, visited him one evening, probably to

obtain full satisfaction whether he was the true Messiah: he acknowledged his divine mission as a prophet, and confessed to him that he was a teacher come from God, because his miracles sufficiently proved it: but our Lord, instead of taking any notice of his compliments, or asking the reason of his visit, stated and explained to him three of the leading subjects of his future ministry; and first, the doctrine of regeneration, or that renovation of the state and relative situation of the soul, which must take place on every man, by the operation of the Spirit of God, before he can be a proper member of his spiritual kingdom. Secondly, of acceptance with God through faith in his atoning sacrifice, which he should offer for sin; which as it was the principal design of his coming into the world must as certainly come to pass as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness: this was, and should appear to be, the most certain proof of the amazing love of God to lost and miserable sinners. Thirdly, the certain and aggravated misery of all who did not receive him as the only Redeemer of mankind. The Son of God ONLY was qualified to be the Saviour of sinners; and he should have full proof of this when, in his future ministry, he should see that light of divine truth shining so full, that it would well illustrate the just condemnation of those who hated it: thus he manifests *what* he is in the temple, as to power and authority; and *who* he is to the ruler of the

Jews, as to his person and doctrine; upon which the enquiring Pharisee might draw this conclusion, that certainly he must be the promised Son of David.

After this he soon left the holy city, and went into the country, preaching in the cities and villages of Judea, where he employed his disciples in baptizing: having greater crowds of people to follow him than John the Baptist, who still continuing his ministry, raised the jealousy of the Pharisees, who were apprehensive of the most alarming consequences, if he was permitted to go on; he therefore left that province for the present, and returned again into Galilee, not willing to prevent the success of his ministry by an apparent opposition to them; or to provoke the evil spirit in them before the time; like his father David, by yielding he conquered.

The small province of Samaria lay between Judea and Galilee, which laid our blessed Lord under the necessity of going directly through it, as he had often done before into Galilee: but a remarkable circumstance made this journey memorable, and is fully related by John: having travelled all the former part of the day, and being fatigued with so long a journey without any refreshment, about noon Jesus, and the few disciples that were with him, arrived at ancient Schechem, now called Sychar: while he ordered the disciples to go into the city, to purchase some refreshment, he sat down at a well, called Jacob's well, till they should return:

a woman from the city came to the well for water, with whom Jesus entered into conversation in a free and affable manner; he asked for some water to drink out of her pitcher, at which she wondered as he was a Jew; because the Jews were such great enemies to the Samaritans, that they would neither eat nor drink with them, and if possible, would have no dealings with them at all.

He told her he had nothing to do with such an evil spirit, and if she knew who was conversing with her she would have asked of him the blessings of divine grace, which he could give her. The woman made light of this, and seemed to treat such a speech with contempt; but he, to convince her that what he said was not to be trifled with, brought her to confession of her immoral life, and that she had lived in a state of iniquity with five different men: after he had showed the poor, polluted, and miserable creature, what she was in herself; he then revealed unto her the true object of worship, and that himself was the only Saviour, the true Mediator between God and guilty sinners, the promised Messiah. This was the first direct acknowledgment he had made of himself: he did not indulge the Jews with any such direct information, knowing it would not have any good tendency, because of the hardness of their hearts; but here, to a poor, guilty, lost soul, brought to a sense of her sin and misery, he opens not only his commission, but the affection of his heart, rejoic-

ing more over the recovery of a lost Samaritan than many Jews, who wish for no repentance.

When the disciples returned, they wondered that he conversed so freely with her, but they durst not ask the reason of it, nor even intimate to her that she ought to depart. But the overjoyed woman, leaving her water-pot, ran into the city, and told every one she met that she had seen the long expected Saviour, and was fully assured it was he, because he had told her all that was in her heart, as well as every action of her life, which none but he could do. The report of this soon ran through the place, and brought the people in flocks to the well, where he still was: his disciples wished him to eat, but his mind was so much engaged about these precious souls, who were flocking towards him, that he told them his meat was to do the will of his Father: it was pleasing to him to see such a fair opening for doing good to precious souls, who were now ready to hear and receive his doctrine: they came with submissive humble minds, and besought him to go with them into the city, which he did, and continued two days preaching the Gospel, and instructing them; on which numbers believed, and said to the woman that they were satisfied from what they had seen ad heard themselves, that he was indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

About this time, John Baptist was taken and shut up in prison, which concluded his ministry

after four years from the beginning of it. After two days he departed from Sychar and came to Cana, where he wrought his first miracle; passing by Nazareth, his own city, assigning as a reason, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country; his fame was spread abroad exceedingly; his name was celebrated every where, Galilee of the Gentiles now enjoyed that great light so long foretold.

While he was at Cana, a nobleman from Capernaum, came to him in behalf of his son, who was dangerously ill of a fever; he intreated him fervently that he would come down and heal him, for he was at the point of death: our Lord to try his faith, did not give him a direct answer, but seemed to evade his request; but on a more fervent application, and more full manifestation of his confidence, he said unto him, go thy way thy son liveth; assuring him that he could heal diseases, and exert his divine power at a distance, as well as when he was present.

He soon went himself to this city and wrought some miracles, constantly preaching in their synagogues, with abundant success and benefit to all; he was therefore glorified of all.

His stay was not long here at present; in the course of his ministry he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up. On the Sabbath day, he went to the synagogue, to join as usual, in the public worship; he was well known here in a private capacity, as a person of ability above the common rank, and the fame of his doctrine and miracles,

had no doubt reached this place before him. The law and the prophets were read every Sabbath-day, and were so divided that the whole Scriptures were read over in public every year *. The ruler of the synagogue, or stated minister, read the section out of the law, and any of the congregation best qualified, might read the section out of the prophets by the appointment of the minister. In the service for the day, that memorable prophecy of the Messiah was recorded, which our blessed Lord having read, made application of it to himself. The passage is, according to the Septuagint translation—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath appointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives, and the recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised: to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

Having read the prophecy, and returned the book to the minister, he sat down, and began to expound the passage, applying it to himself, as the only person intended by it; showing them, by many gracious words, that he came into the world for the very purposes therein specified. The assembly, who all knew the man, were astonished beyond measure to hear him. They reviled and reproached him, as a poor, mean, presumptuous fellow; asking one another, by way of ridicule, Is

* Prideaux Conn. part. I. lib. 5. p. 333.

not this Joseph's son, the poor carpenter, who has lived all his time among us, and who died about four or five years ago?

In maintenance of his divine character however, and to convince them that he could not be serviceable to them, through their own infidelity, he referred them to some instances of the same nature, recorded in the sacred history; wherein God had withdrawn his mercies, in a judicial manner from ungrateful Israel, to whom he had been so gracious through such a series of generations: and showed compassion to some poor strangers, who were not of the common wealth of Israel. This plain discourse, which reflected so much on their want of attention to their greatest privilege, viz. the residence of the Son of God in their city, enraged them to such a degree, that they seized him, and were carrying him to the highest cliff of the rock on which their city was built, to throw him down and destroy him, as a blasphemer and a mad man; but by his divine power he extricated himself out of their hands, and left them. How different was his reception here to what it was at Sychar. There, abandoned characters receive him gladly, and reap abundant benefit from his instruction; here, self-righteous infidels despise and reject him, and would, if possible, destroy him.

He now made his chief residence in the metropolis of Galilee, and preached his Gospel, with great acceptance of the people, in their synagogues;

curing various diseases, and casting out evil spirits as they came in his way. They were astonished at the nature, extent, and efficacy of his doctrine, and at the manner of his delivery, which had the authority of all the graces of oratory.

While he was teaching in the synagogue, a man who had a spirit of an unclean devil, cried out with a loud voice, saying, what have I to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth! I know thee who thou art, the holy One of God: Art thou come to destroy us? Let us alone. But Jesus ordered him who spoke to hold his peace, and to quit his possession, which the evil spirit was obliged to do. This miracle amazed the whole audience, and made them say one among another, What a word is this? For with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits and they obey.

When he had finished his discourse, he came to Peter's house, and finding his Mother-in-law in bed in a very high fever, he instantly recovered her, on which, to prove the reality of her cure, she waited on them and served them in the house. The same evening he cured several others, and cast out many devils, who were very busy in crying, thou art Christ the Son of God: but he would not admit of their testimony, and therefore commanded their silence.

Here the evangelist Matthew takes notice of the accomplishment of that prophecy, which the prophet Isaiah had given upwards of seven hundred years before; himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.

It was the Sabbath-day, when the blessed Jesus was so busy in preaching, curing the sick, and casting out devils. Early the next morning, he went out of the city into a private place for meditation and prayer; but was not long in this retirement before his disciples and the people found him: they besought him not to leave them; but he answered them, that he must preach the kingdom of God in other cities as well as theirs, because he was sent for that purpose; he could not therefore confine his ministry to one particular place. Hence he set out on an excursion through all Galilee, to preach in their synagogues, and to cast out devils.

He began his journey by entering into one of Peter's fishing boats, and desiring him to put it off a little from the shore, but not at too great a distance for the people to hear him, he sat down in the most convenient part of it, and taught them. When he had done preaching, he said to Peter go out into the middle of the Lake *, and let down your nets to catch some fish. Peter told him of

* This lake, called frequently the sea of Galilee, of Tiberias, and the lake of Gennesareth, may deserve a little notice in this place. It was called the sea of Chinneroth, in the first settlement of the Israelites in the land of Canaan, and was in the northern parts of the country. Josephus says, it was a hundred furlongs in length, and forty in breadth: that is, twelve miles and a half long, and five broad; the bottom is gravel, which renders the water both of a good colour and taste. It is softer than either fountain or river water; and at the same time so cold that it will not grow warm though exposed to the rays of the

the little or no success which they had through the whole of the last night, and doubted whether there would be any more now; however, if he wished, they would make the trial. Accordingly, the nets were put out, and very soon enclosed a great multitude of fishes, so that they were not able to support them; they called in some who were fishing at a distance to their assistance; and both their vessels were so filled with the miraculous draught, that they could hardly carry them to the shore.

Peter was so struck with the evident appearance of the divine power, that he fell down before Jesus, and said, O Lord, I am a sinful man, and not worthy to have such a divine guest, depart from me, I am not able to bear the weight of such glory as now overpowers me?

The Lord designed in this, to show these disciples, that the same power which they saw so clearly exerted over the waters, and the inhabitants thereof, should, also, by their means be manifested over

sun in the very hottest season of the year. The river Jordan runs through the midst of it, which stocks it with a great variety of fish, of a peculiar form and flavour, not found in any other place.

The countries around it were very fertile and populous; and many cities and villages stood on its shores: on the eastern side were Chorazin, Bethsaida, Gadara, and Hippon; on the west Capernaum, Tiberias, and Tarricher, all these last in the province of Galilee. This account we may believe to be correct, as Josephus was governor of Galilee in the Jewish wars, and gives this description from his own personal knowledge of it.

the earth, and the souls of men; and that he did this to illustrate to them, that henceforth they should catch men by the net of the Gospel. Accordingly, as soon as they got ashore, and had settled their small affairs, Peter, James, and John, who were partners in this business, and had seen this great miracle, left all, attended him every where, and became his inseparable companions; these three were the chosen witnesses of their Lord's most eminent transactions.

Jesus now set forward on his projected tour, with the three before named disciples, whose attachment to his sacred person was now inviolable.

If they before had received a general invitation to follow him, as Matthew seems to intimate, they now had special reasons never to forsake him, who had given them in particular, such evidence of his divine nature, authority, and messiahship,

He came to a certain city, and met with a very distressing object in it, which was a poor man full of leprosy; as soon as he saw Jesus he fell on his face, and in the most humble and suppliant manner, intreated him to cure him of his disorder, saying, he had no doubt of his being able, if he was but willing to make such a miserable creature the object of his compassion. The compassionate Son of God immediately assured him, he was as willing as he was able; and therefore without any further trial of his faith, instantly cured him, charging him to keep his recovery secret, and go to the priest to show him-

self, and offer what the ceremonial law required on the occasion. But the overjoyed man could not contain the gratitude of his heart, and spread it abroad for the good of other such objects, who might be in want of the same physician; and eventually, it brought great multitudes to him, so that he could not continue in the city, but went out into the uncultivated parts of the country, where there was more room, and convenience for the people.

Having spent some time in the province of Galilee, he returned again to Capernaum; great companies of people from all the adjacent towns, even from Judea and Jerusalem itself, came to hear his words, and to receive the benefits of his miracles; and the power of the Lord was manifestly present to heal all their diseases. The concourse of the people was so great, that the house in which he was teaching could not contain them; they were crowded about the door in such a manner, that some men who were bringing a very infirm paralytic to be cured, could not gain admittance to lay him before Jesus. Their anxiety was so great, for the poor man's recovery, that they took the resolution of carrying him up to the top of the house, which was a flat roof, and to open an aperture over the place where he stood, to let the sick man down, lying on his couch, just before him in the midst of the multitude.

This was so evident an act of faith in his divine

power, that he said before them all, man, thy sins are forgiven thee; hereby manifesting his divine mercy towards his soul, while he extended his power to the recovery of his body. The Scribes, who did not know that he was God manifest in the flesh, and acknowledged him to be no more than an eminent prophet, surmised among themselves that he was a blasphemer; saying, who can forgive sins but God alone?

The omniscient Son of God knew how their thoughts were employed, on the exercise of his mercy to this sinful and guilty creature, and attacked them upon it, asking them whether it was easier to say, thy sins be forgiven thee; or, arise and take up thy bed and walk? He did not wait for an answer to so plain an interrogation, but with the majesty of a divine authority, assured them that although he appeared to them to be but a man, yet, being as certainly God, he had the power of forgiving sins on the earth, even though he was a man; and that it was no more impious in him to exercise mercy to the soul of a believing penitent, than to apply his healing virtue to the body, and enable such a poor object to take up his couch and go home; therefore he said to the sick of the palsy, with an air of God-like dignity, I say unto thee arise, and take up thy bed and go unto thine house, which he accordingly did, to the astonishment and high satisfaction of all.

Some time after, as he was going by the sea-side,

he saw a publican sitting in his office, receiving the customs which the passengers or traders constantly coming and going over the water paid to the Roman government: this officer's name was Levi, which may intimate that he was a Jew; and probably not one of the first, either in a religious or moral sense, if not an apostate, who was become a Gentile, and an odious oppressor of his own people: him however Jesus called, and only said unto him follow me, which he immediately did, and became his disciple. To express the gratitude of his heart for such distinguishing goodness as he had received, and to put a mark of respect on his blessed Lord and Master, to whom he for ever should devote his services from henceforth: he made a great feast in his own house, at which many publicans were present with our Lord and his disciples. There were also Scribes and Pharisees at this entertainment, who scrupulously observed every word and action of the principal guest at the table, who, doubtless, carried away a prejudice, and spread it into the whole sect, against Jesus and his followers, because of their familiarity with the publicans. But he justified himself and companions, by telling these narrow self-righteous people, that they who are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick, and assures them in plain terms, saying, I came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.

Sometime after, passing with his disciples

through some corn-fields, in company with certain Pharisees on a Sabbath-day, they being hungry plucked some of the ears of corn, rubbed them in their hands, and eat them, when they had blown away the chaff. This appeared to the scrupulous Pharisees to be a breach of the Sabbath-day; they therefore checked them for such seeming profanity, and said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath-days? But their blessed Master defended them, not only on the ground of the necessary calls of nature, but from the example of holy David, who went into the house of the Lord with those who were with him on a journey, and did eat of the shew-bread, which, by the law, was wholly devoted to the priests, and he was never charged with any crime for this. If this was justifiable by the laws of necessity and mercy, his disciples were equally so in the present instance: adding, that as they did this in his presence they had sufficient authority; because the institution of the Sabbath itself was from him, as the God of nature, and the God of Israel; and was subject to his authority as the Head of the church.

This discourse suggests a few practical reflections, with which we shall conclude.

In the manifestation of this divine character we see the glorious eternal Sun of Righteousness arising with unspeakable majesty. He shines on the souls of men with the most excellent and cheering

light. He brings healing to the wounded; health to the sick; and salvation to the lost. His brightness darkens the moon-shine of all ceremonial ordinances. The brightest stars of the prophetic order lose their lustre when he appears.

The devil and satan, who, at the beginning of time, ruined mankind, and in every age has been the great adversary: see how he is foiled in all his attempts to prevent the Son of God from manifesting the riches of his grace! John the Baptist going before him to usher in the brightness of his glory, is absorbed by his resplendent light. The friend of the bridegroom rejoices in the happy occasion of introducing him to his beloved people; which done, he retires with the highest satisfaction and pleasure.

How great is his zeal for the purity of the house of God! How manifest is his power and authority in driving out the hypocrites and pollutions which defiled it!

See his distinguishing love and compassion to those penitent souls who, with humble attention, received and heard him! He reveals himself to seemingly the most unworthy! The poor, and perhaps profane, fishermen of Galilee; the abandoned women, and debauched drunkards, of Sychar in Samaria; Levi, the oppressing publican of Capernaum. How great, how undeserved, how rich, are the compassions of the Son of God to the souls of men.

In this part of our Redeemer's history we see the horrid sin of infidelity. Pride and self-conceit are the source of this pernicious evil. See it reigning in the Scribes and Pharisees; and particularly in his own townsmen. This is the fruitful source of persecution; from hence have flowed all the oppositions he met with throughout the whole course of his ministry; and from hence have arisen all the persecutions, tortures, and massacres, which have ever afflicted or destroyed his followers.

But these ought not to be a discouragement to any who love his name, because he hath first encountered them in all their force, and destroyed their pernicious effects. He hath supported sufferers for his sake, and made them victorious in all ages. His promises are faithful and true to all who follow him in the same scenes of sorrow. They shall consequently triumph with him in the fullest manifestations of his glory at the last day. Let these considerations support our trembling hearts, labouring under many fears, and strengthen our weak hands in working out our salvation.

DISCOURSE VIII.

His Manifestation, or Public appearance, continued.

THE SECOND PASSOVER.

Our blessed Lord had spent above a year in his public ministry, and manifested his divinity on various occasions, as we have seen in our last discourse. We are now to attend him in the more full displays of his deity, and in the clearer proofs of his being the Son of God, if clearer can be advanced. What we have seen is, doubtless, sufficient to satisfy us of this reality of the truth: but as we proceed through his history we have increasing evidence, and the most undeniable proofs, that he, and none else, is the promised Messiah. The light of his doctrines and miracles increases with the progress of his ministry, it rises more and more in strength and grandeur, like the light of the day, till it arrives at its meridian splendor.

His attention to the public ordinances of religion is not the least remarkable. This, indeed, we may naturally expect, as they owed their institution and establishment intirely to him; being appointed by his authority, they were honoured with his presence. It is certain he could reap no

advantage from them, but embraced these opportunities of communicating benefits to the church in general, and to some individuals in particular. He hereby sets an example to all his followers to honour all the public ordinances of divine appointment with their personal attendance; and it administers reproof to such as neglect them.

The feast of the passover* at Jerusalem was now at hand, and Jesus went thither as usual, that he might pay obedience to the law, which required all the males of Israel to appear before the Lord. While he was in the holy city, he went on one of the Sabbaths to a noted building, called Bethesda, in which was a pool of water; an angel from heaven, at certain times, moved this water, which, by divine appointment, gave such virtue to it, as to cure any disorder in any person who first could step into it afterwards: our blessed Lord saw here a multitude of expecting patients under various complaints, but did not see it necessary to exert his divine power, to supersede this standing miracle, which had so much of the divine goodness in it; however, he fixed his benign atten-

* It is highly probable this was the feast of the passover; for it seems that the evangelist John particularly recited the four passovers between our Saviour's baptism and his death. The first in chap. ii. 13: the second in this place, or no where: the third in chap. vi. 4: and the fourth in chap. xiii. 1.

Vide Lightf. Hor. Heb. p. 554, and Hor. 664, Guise note on John v. 1.

tion on one particular object, whose want of strength had prevented him from enjoying the benefits of this common mercy for the long space of thirty-eight years. Jesus went to him, and asked him if he was willing to be made whole; the poor man replied, that he had no friend to assist him, and was too weak himself to get to the pool after the motion of the water, and that he was always prevented by some other stronger person getting in before him; but the compassionate Son of God, without any trial of his faith, by the word of his sovereign authority, said unto him, rise, take up thy bed and walk; which he immediately did.

Certain Jews met him carrying his bed, who rebuked him as a sabbath-breaker, for carrying a burden on the Sabbath-day; but the man told them that he was ordered to do so by the person who had cured him. He did not at that time know to whom he was indebted for his recovery; but some time after, Jesus met him in the temple, and gave him to understand, that it was he who had cured him, and bid him beware of deserving a similar, or greater punishment; intimating, that some high offence against the Almighty, had been the occasion of his long and severe affliction. The overjoyed man went immediately and informed the Jews that it was Jesus who had cured him; thinking, perhaps that what they knew of him, as a teacher sent from God would satisfy them that he did not do wrong, in carrying his bed on the Sab-

bath, when ordered so to do by such great authority. But this information had a contrary effect to what it was intended; for the Jews, instead of commending this act of mercy, were so much the more prejudiced, and maliciously combined together against both the ministry and life of Christ.

In his own vindication he instituted a very strong, invincible defence, which the grand Sanhedrim was not able to resist; he spoke more plainly than ever he had before, of his being the Son of God, and of his equality with the Father; and showed them that the works which the Father and the Son performed, proceeded from the same cause and motive, which were the divine essence and their unspeakable love to each other; the happy effects of which the miserable sons of Adam should enjoy: because what the Father had done hitherto was for their benefit, and the Son was now incarnate for the same end.

As a proof of this, he solemnly assured them, that though, according to his office which he now exercised as a prophet and a Saviour, he could do nothing without the concurrence, and co-operation of his Father; yet so great was his Father's love to him, that he had communicated all power to him, such as should produce greater things, than they had yet seen; particularly raising the dead, which they believed none but God was able to do; and they should soon have sufficient evidence that he had both authority and power to do so.—

That, whosoever should believe and receive him in his real and true character, should through death arise to everlasting life, being prepared by his quickening Spirit and grace for his eternal glory. He told them the time of his coming, and just at hand, when the world legally condemned for sin, and spiritually dead to God through sin, should hear the quickening, reviving voice of the Son of God, and such as heard it, should most certainly live, for the Son having life in himself, could communicate it, and he had received authority as man to administer to men, that spiritual, holy, immortal life, which they so much stood in need of.

He told them further, that they needed not to wonder at what they had heard respecting the authority and power of his word in the world; for by his power the dead, who were now in their graves, and had paid the debt of nature from the beginning of the world, should be raised again; and the whole human race should come forth as out of a prison, and stand before his judgment-seat to be adjudged by him, and awarded to an everlasting state, according to the evidence of their good or evil actions. He assured them that in these judicial proceedings, he should act by authority from his Father, who had commissioned him as the head and judge of mankind, so to act; adding, if he had only spoken of himself as he was a man, and as one distinct from his Father they might doubt of what he said: but since the Father had sent the Son,

and he had assumed the real and true human nature, they had no ground to call in question, the truth of what he had advanced.

After our blessed Lord had thus boldly asserted, before the great judicature of the nation, who he was as to his person, and what he was as to his authority; he brings forward several testimonies in proof of what he had said. He first refers them to John the baptist, to whom they had sent priests, and Levites to enquire who and what he was. They acknowledged him to be a burning and shining light; and they could not but recollect, the testimony that he gave concerning him. But he had a more convincing evidence than any thing the baptist could say of him, which was, the real and salutary miracles which he performed: these of themselves, without any other corroborating circumstance, were sufficient to attest his authority. He had however a more powerful witness, which was the Father, who declared him not only to be his servant, but his Son, in whose person and works he was well pleased. He next appeals to the holy Scriptures, which they acknowledged to have received from God, which they most certainly did; These, he declares, gave a particular description of him, both in the prophecies and representations of him which they did not understand; and therefore could not see that they pointed him out. Moses in whom they placed the highest confidence, had written expressly of him, in his incarnate state;

but since they could not believe his writings, it was not likely they would believe his words.

In a few Sabbaths after, he went into a synagogue and preached; and meeting with a poor man whose right hand was withered, he restored the use of it to him, by ordering him to stretch it forth. He did this in the presence of his most implacable enemies, who were greatly enraged, that their authority and influence were so greatly eclipsed, and particularly that he despised their sanctimonious regard for the Sabbath: they were filled with madness, and consulted together what they might do to Jesus: the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians how they might destroy him.

Our blessed Lord, from whom nothing could be hid, knew what they were plotting against him; he therefore withdrew from the place, and prosecuted his ministry in other parts of the country. Great multitudes followed him with their infirm and diseased, all which he healed, with a particular injunction that they should not make him known. Here the Evangelist Matthew, or Levi the publican before spoken of, takes particular notice of the prophecies which were fulfilled in these transactions; he quotes the words of Isaiah, and shows how they are accomplished in the person of Jesus Christ; particularly, pointing out the compassion, meekness, patience, and fortitude of his character.

We now come to an important æra in our Lord's

ministry, which is, the choosing his apostles to be his companions through life, and his successors in the ministry after his death. The Lord of glory nominates his ambassadors whom he will soon commission, and send into all the world; he sets apart the principal stones for the foundation of his evangelical temple, himself being the chief corner stone: he spent the whole preceding night in prayer, for the divine blessing on the persons whom he had chosen, that they might be fitted for, and supported in the great work he had for them to do.

He chose twelve, a number corresponding to the Fathers of the tribes of Israel; they had been before called to be the followers of their divine Master, with some particular marks of his attention; some of them had been the disciples of the baptist, and were prepared by him to become the disciples of Jesus. The greatest part of them were fishermen by occupation, and procured a subsistence on the great lake before described. Men very unlikely indeed for the great undertaking of reforming the world. If human wisdom had been concerned in it; the profoundest rabbins, the wisest philosophers, and most elegant orators, would have been selected to this most important business; but here we see the wisdom of God most gloriously manifested in choosing the weak to confound the mighty; illiterate but honest men shall, in the hand of omnipotence, and under the direction of the incarnate Son of God, subdue the self-righteous pride of the Jews,

and the superstitious folly of the Gentiles: the whole world lying in wickedness shall be regenerated by their means.

When he had chosen his apostles, he gave them a particular charge concerning the doctrines they were to propagate in his name; he therefore, went up into a mountain accompanied with a vast concourse of people, who had assembled from all parts of the country, having brought their sick, diseased, and such as were possessed with evil spirits to be healed. Being sat down on an eminence, his apostles and disciples gathered round him, to whom he delivered the sermon recorded by Matthew in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of his history. This evangelical discourse is an epitome of the Gospel; it begins with describing the true Christian character, and the blessings which belong to it. Then opens and applies the spirituality and immutability of the moral law, and rectifies the mistakes which had been entertained concerning it. It goes on with many suitable directions respecting the dispositions of our minds towards different characters, even those who may be our most bitter enemies. Here we have full instructions concerning the object and the manner of our worship, our prayers, charities, benevolence, sincerity, disinterestedness, and dependance on the divine bounty. We are guarded against censoriousness, religious vanity, supine indifference, errors in judgment, as well as mistakes in life. It concludes with pointing out

the different effects, which shall most certainly follow the use or abuse of it in a very striking metaphor drawn from the nature of things; a most appropriate application of such important subjects.

When the discourse was finished, the multitudes were no less astonished at what they had heard him preach, than they were at the miracles they had seen him perform; such divinity and benevolence in his doctrine, such majesty and power in his delivery as far surpassed any thing that human eloquence could exhibit. Every word had its weight, and sunk deep into the mind, carrying light into the understanding, conviction into the conscience, and heavenly animation into the earthly affections; the God of Israel addressed the soul, and gave it to know and feel his presence.

It would seem, the mountain where this divine celebrated sermon was delivered, stood near Capernaum, for when he had finished he went thither; this city was the most highly honoured with his company of any, his residence and home being chiefly in it. Here he could not be long retired. He was soon applied to by a certain captain, who had a servant whom he valued, lying very ill at the point of death; deeming himself unworthy to approach such a sacred presence, he requested the favour of some elders of the Jews to wait on Jesus, and intreat him fervently to come and heal him. He went with them at their request,

and when they came within the sight of the house, the Centurion sent to beg he would speak the word and say his servant should be recovered, and he had no doubt but it would be done; professing his faith in the divine power of the blessed Jesus, which he could exercise at a distance as well as by his presence.

The messengers he sent gave their master's reason for acting in this manner, which were the high sense of the divine character he sustained, and his own unworthiness of such honour as his presence would confer. This pious commander showed such faith and humility as were surprising; it was marvellous in itself, that one in such a station should have more true religion than any Israelite; As the Son of God, and the Saviour of souls, Jesus was the author of that grace which this good man enjoyed, but as a man and a prophet he marvelled at him, and mentioned him as an example worthy of imitation to all that followed him, and as a reproof to their infidelity. Those who were sent last with their master's confession and request, returned again to the house, and found the servant recovered.

Next day, he manifested his divine power to an extent which he had not before done. He had given many proofs that he could preserve the lives of men from death, but he had not hitherto shown that he had the power over death also, and that he was the Lord of the dead as well as of the living.

Going to a city called Nain, he met at the gate, as he was going in, the funeral of a young man, who was an only son, and perhaps the only support of his mother, who was now a widow.

The compassionate Son of God, commiserating the deeply afflicted widow's case, told her not to weep, and ordered the company to stop, and set down the bier on which the body was laid; which done, he said to the young man, I say unto thee arise, which he immediately did, to the astonishment of all who were present. He delivered him unto the hands of his mother, who, with inexpressible joy, received him, and returned home. The effect of this amazing miracle was very great; the report of it spread abroad in the country every where, and the people glorified God for raising up a great prophet among them, and thus so manifestly and mercifully visiting his people.

The report of this, and many other astonishing works of Jesus, was brought to John the Baptist, still a prisoner in the castle of Macherus, which lay on the borders of Judea, not far from Arabia. His disciples probably still infatuated with the notion of the Messiah's temporal glory, or envying the popularity of Jesus, and thinking he neglected their master, who had been now five months in prison, whom they supposed he might release by some miraculous means, that he might be near his person, and have some eminent office in his kingdom, if he was indeed the Son of God, as John had

declared him to be: that all who adhered to him as a messenger from God might have full satisfaction on this head, he appointed two to go to Jesus in his name, and to put the question to him, whether he really was the promised Saviour or not: I cannot think with Drs. Stillingfleet and Fleetwood that John had any doubt of this in himself, or was any way discontent with his confinement; I rather suppose him well satisfied with this conduct of Providence respecting him, as it had a tendency to further the designs of his blessed Lord and Master, and to prevent any suspicions of state policy, which their mutual enemies might easily have raised, if John had been at liberty, and maintained his great popularity.

These messengers came to Jesus, and informed him, that John the baptist had sent them to know whether he really was the promised Messiah, who was certainly to come into the world; or whether they were to wait for the appearance of another. The blessed Jesus well knew the motives from which this inquiry arose, and the reasons which gave being to it; and therefore he referred them to what he did, as the most satisfying and convincing evidence that he was, most undoubtedly, the person foretold; because he fulfilled the Scripture prophecies, which declared that God would come with vengeance against sin and its effects; but with healing and salvation to the persons of men: then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the

ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, &c.

They no sooner had proposed their questions, than he gave them visible demonstration to answer it; for he cured many of their plagues and infirmities, and cast out evil spirits on the first hour of their arrival; and ordered them to go and inform their master of what they had seen, and to tell him that they had sufficient proof to satisfy every reasonable inquirer in what they had seen and heard; giving them, at the same time, a gentle rebuke for their groundless prejudices, and their want of faith in him.

As soon as they were gone, he asked the people who surrounded him, What were the motives which induced them so zealously to follow and attend the ministry of John: he was certainly, he said, a most eminent man, and greater than any prophet who had ever appeared before him: he did not indeed appear like the great philosophers of the age, nor under the authority of any sovereign, but in a manner suited to the great work he was commissioned from heaven to perform; which was to prepare the way for the most glorious display of mercy in that dispensation of grace, which was now opening, and about to be set up in the per-

sonal ministry of God himself. He was that messenger foretold by the prophets, who should go before him, and prepare his way: but notwithstanding the superiority of John to all preceding prophets, the Gospel dispensation is so superior in its ministration and glory, to any thing he could say of it, that he who exercises the most inferior office in the kingdom of God is superior to him, both as to the full manifestation of all divine truth, and the blessed effects which it shall produce among men.

When the people heard this high encomium upon the character and ministry of John, whom they almost all believed to be a messenger sent by a special order from heaven, and the intimations given of greater blessings in the Messiah's kingdom: they justified God in all the parts of his divine conduct towards them in the ministry of John; and glorified him for his unspeakable mercy in such a burning and shining light, to whose baptism they had generally submitted.

Soon after, our blessed Lord was courteously invited, by an opulent pharisee called Simon, to his house, which invitation he readily embraced. While he, with the other company, were sat at table, a certain woman of the city, who had been noted for her impiety and loose life, but to whom he had shown mercy on a former occasion, came to express her grateful affections for the mercies she had received. She stood behind him, over-

powered with a sense of his divine grace; her tears fell upon his feet, which she wiped off with her hair, which was long, and flowed about her shoulders; she embraced them in the most humble and tender manner, and then anointed them with an ointment, which she had bought for the purpose, according to the custom of those days.

Simon observing this, and knowing the woman's character to have been infamous, began to surmise that certainly this is not the holy man he pretends to be, nor such a prophet as the people take him for; otherwise he would not suffer this base woman to be so familiar with him.

But the omniscient Son of God, to whom all hearts are open, and every secret thing is known, seeing what was in the Pharisee's mind interrupted his surmisings, by stating a plain case, which should both convince and instruct him, and vindicate himself, together with the conduct of this seemingly presumptuous penitent. The case was this; a certain creditor had two debtors; the one owed him ten times as much as the other; and when neither of them were able to pay he generously forgave them both. Now the question is, which of these two would have the most love and gratitude? Simon answered readily, he who owed the greatest debt. On which Jesus said to him, you have judged properly. Now to make the application of the case; turning to the woman, and addressing himself to his host, he said, You

see this woman, who was a very great debtor, both to divine and human laws; a sinner before God and man; but mercy hath been extended to her from God, to whom she could pay nothing; therefore her affections are warmly attached to me; and she hath even out-done those common civilities which you have not shown me when I entered your house; though none of these things are any way grateful to me, but as they are expressions of that gratitude which flows from a sense of forgiving grace. Then he declared before all the company that her sins, however many, were forgiven her.

This open declaration astonished those who heard it, and they said within themselves, who is this that forgiveth sins also. They were not aware that the God of grace was now conversing with them: they heard with admiration the instructive conversation of the man; they allowed his prophetic authority as a teacher; but to assume the province of God, who only could forgive sins, was blasphemous: their indignation arose against such bold impiety. But without taking any notice of their surmisings, which arose from their ignorance of his divine person; he said unto the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.

We now find the incarnate Son of God pursuing the intent of his manifestation by preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom of God to every city and village throughout the country, attended

by his apostles, and many women, who ministered to them of their substance.

While he was assiduously employed in this tour, he wrought several miracles; particularly on one whom an evil spirit had made both deaf and dumb. Several Scribes and Pharisees, whom malice or curiosity had brought from Jerusalem, followed him, and observed his conduct: they ascribed his miracles to the power of Belzebub; against which he defends himself by arguments and illustrations, which might fully convince them that they were guilty of an unpardonable sin, in ascribing the most evident works of God to the prince of devils: and when they requested a sign of his divine authority he sharply reproved them for their incredulity, referring them to the history of Jonas for an illustration of his death and resurrection.

His manner of teaching was by parables, in a plain, easy, and familiar method; illustrating spiritual things by earthly similitudes; as the sower and the seed; the wheat and the tares: the influence of leaven; the treasure in the field; the merchant; the net cast into the sea; an householder; the mustard-seed; the lighted candle: and innumerable others which are not recorded. His historians assure us, that this was his most common method of teaching; and that the spirit of prophecy had marked him out by this mode of instruction in opposition to all other characters. Therefore, says the apostle St. Matthew, all these things spake

Jesus unto them in parables, and without a parable spake he not unto them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world, chap. xiii. 34, 35. The words of the prophecy are; I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, Psalm lxxviii. 1, 2; and xlix. 3, 4.

Having spent some time on the west side of the lake of Galilee; he went over to the other side, into the country of the Gergesenes. While on the passage, there arose a great tempest, in which there was much danger of being cast away. Our Lord being fatigued with incessant labour, retired to the stern of the ship, and fell asleep; but as they were in imminent danger, they awoke him, and in the greatest consternation, cried out, LORD SAVE US: WE PERISH MASTER, MASTER WE PERISH. As soon as he arose, he rebuked the storm, and commanded the winds to be still: and immediately the elements were obedient to their Creator's command. This was such a manifestation of his power as they had not seen before, and filled their souls with a reverential dread, and caused them to exclaim, What manner of man is this, to whom the very winds and waters are obedient!

Landing in Philip's dominions, in the province of Trachonites, now inhabited, as is thought by some, by the descendants of the ancient Gergashi-

tics, and many Jews: two men possessed with devils, and grievously distracted, with some tattered rags about them, came running to the blessed Saviour, and fell down, and adored him. They were hideous spectacles, but one much fiercer than the other; which may be the reason why Mark and Luke mention but one only. On their approach to Jesus, the devils acknowledged that he was the Son of God, and expressed their fear that he was come to torment them.

That he came to eject them, and release the poor men from their tyranny is certain; but they knew not what other orders they should receive: they, therefore, earnestly implored him that they might have leave to enter into an herd of swine, feeding on the mountains just at hand; which he granted, and hereby showed his authority: the greatness of the deliverance the men had received, and the deserved punishment, which these despisers of the law of God suffered*, when all their swine were drowned by the devils, who entered into them, and hurried them furiously into the deep.

* The Jews were prohibited by the ceremonial law, from making use of these creatures; and therefore were not permitted to breed them: it was a manifest contempt of the authority of God, to have such flocks of them. Hence, it was a just punishment on these profane people, to permit these evil spirits to destroy such evil property. The whole of this country first promised to Abraham, and afterwards given to his holy seed, was ceremonially holy, but swine were in the same sense impure and a nuisance in Emmanuel's land.

Notwithstanding so clear a manifestation of divine mercy to these wretched men, and power in casting out legions, or multitudes of devils from them, the profane people, fearful of his continuance any time among them, besought him to leave their country; on which he returned, and came to Capernaum.

Soon after his return, a ruler of the synagogue, named Jairus, who had an only daughter of about twelve years of age, at the point of death. This good man came and fervently intreated him to recover her: he went with him to his house. On the way a remarkable circumstance took place, which deserves our notice, as it shows us the power of faith, and the greater power of the Son of God, whose mercies and compassions to such as believed in him, were ever open and free: a certain woman, who had been grievously afflicted for twelve years, with an unnatural flux of blood, and had spent her whole estate to obtain a recovery without any effect. Being persuaded in her own mind, that if she could any way have access to him, if it were only to touch him, or to take hold of the border of his garment, she did not doubt but she should be cured; making one of the company that attended him to the ruler's house, she pressed forward, as privately as possible, and unobserved put out her hand to touch his robe, and took hold of the edge of it in full confidence that she should be healed. The event answered her expecta-

tion, she was instantly made whole. Jesus knew in himself the woman's case, her faith, and fortitude; and to make the whole manifest in her conduct, for the encouragement of all weak and timorous believers, enquired of her, saying, "Who hath touched me." The poor woman came forward, and acknowledged what she had done with fear and trembling, because she had acted contrary to the ceremonial law, which prohibits the unclean from touching those who are clean, much more such a sacred person. But so far was he from blaming, that he highly commended her; saying, "Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole."

During this delay of the journey, the ruler's daughter died; and a message was sent to Jairus to inform him of it, and not to trouble the Lord any further on the occasion. But when the blessed Jesus knew this, he said to the damsel's father, "Fear not, only believe, and she shall be restored." He came to the house and found the usual mourners come together on the occasion, with their musical instruments, to assist the lamentations of the family. When he entered, he ordered them to stop, telling them the child was not dead, but only asleep: they derided him for so saying, knowing that she was certainly dead. However, dismissing all the company except Peter, James, and John, he took them, with the father and mother of the deceased, and going into the room where the corpse

lay, he took her by the hand, and commanded her to rise. She immediately rose up, and walked about, as if she had not been afflicted. He then ordered her astonished parents to give her something to eat, requesting them to keep the matter secret, that this display of his deity might not hasten the malicious designs of the Scribes and Pharisees against his life, for his time was not yet fully come, to make his life an offering for sin.

Diligently employing his time, he travelled all over the country, teaching the people: and after some time he sent out his twelve apostles, by two together, to different parts to teach in his name; and endowed them not only with abilities for instruction, but with a power of curing diseases. After their return, a little before the passover, he went up into a mountain with them, and great multitudes of people; where we see another manifestation of his power and godhead, in feeding five thousand men, besides women and children, with five barley loaves and two small fishes, and gathering up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained.

This miraculous supply, led the multitude to take up a resolution of immediately declaring him their sovereign; but this honour he positively refused, and left them, taking his disciples with him to give them orders to sail over the lake: while he tarried behind for his private devotions, after he had dismissed the people.

The disciples went off according to order: they toiled hard all night, and made but little way in their passage. About four or five in the morning, the Lord came to them walking upon the water, and seemed as if he would pass by them: being greatly alarmed at such an unusual sight, they cried out with fear, on which he spoke to them, to let them know it was he. Peter, to assure himself that what he saw was really his Master, and not a spectre, desired his permission to come to him on the water, to which he consented: but Peter's faith and courage soon failing him, he began to sink, and must have perished had not the mighty Saviour been just at hand, who took hold of him, and supported him till they both got into the vessel. Here, observe, Peter's rashness received a check, and his presumption a punishment: nevertheless, the moment of his necessity, was the Redeemer's opportunity to save him. And it highly becomes all Christians to keep within the limits of their duty, lest, by being righteous over much, they either sink or ruin themselves.

In this discourse we see the increasing glories of Emmanuel: here we have undeniable proofs of his divinity. The purity, plainness, and fulness of his doctrine illustrate, not only that he is a teacher come from God, but that he is God the teacher; descending to the meanest capacity of his disciples, opening and applying to them in private what they had heard him declare in public. They

heard the voice of God in his discourse, and saw the majesty of God in his person; every day gave them sufficient evidence that he was the Son of God.

We have seen him manifesting his divine power in many stupendous miracles, which were greater in their nature and consequences, than any which were done the year before. The two resurrections which we have taken notice of, the first of the widow's son, and the second of the ruler's daughter, are sufficient proofs that he is the Lord of Life; and can restore life as certainly as sin can destroy it.

How highly is the glory of the God of nature manifested, in the powerful voice of Jesus Christ, when he commands the winds and the waves to be still! When he blesses the five barley loaves, and the two small fishes; a repast barely sufficient for himself and his twelve apostles; yet they shall grow and improve to the satisfying of five thousand men, and perhaps as many women and children; and after all a basket full shall remain for each apostle.

Is this the work of a mere creature? No: it is the doing of the Lord, and wonderous in our eyes.

See the divinity of the incarnate Son of God, supporting his humanity on the fluid, boisterous waters, which threatened destruction to his fatigued and affrighted followers! He appeared in the dark,

and in the storm, walking at their side, with the cause of their fears, and the source of their destruction under his feet. Ye believers in the Son of God, why are ye fearful in the storms of a boisterous, tempestuous world! He will meet you in the waves of persecution, and save you, and the cause of truth you are engaged in from being lost.

END OF VOL I.

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